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TORTESA THE USURER.

TORTESA THE USURER.

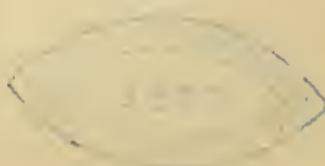
A Play.

BY N. P. WILLIS.
" *Author of "The American Farmer."*

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL COLMAN,
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1839.



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1839

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P R E S E N T A T I O N.

To save his country the perpetration of a wrong,
the Author anticipates the law, by presenting this
published Play to whomever pleases to perform it for
his own benefit.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DUKE OF FLORENCE.

COUNT FALCONE.

TORTESA—*a usurer.*

ANGELO—*a young painter.*

TOMASO—*his Servant.*

* * *

* * *

ISABELLA DE FALCONE.

ZIPPA—*a Glover's daughter.*

Other characters—*a Counsellor, a page, the Count's Secretary, a Tradesman, a Monk, Lords, Ladies, Officer, Soldiers, &c.*

TORTESA THE USURER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

[*A drawing-room in Tortesa's house. Servant discovered reading the bill of a tradesman, who is in attendance.*]

SERVANT, (*reading.*)

"Silk hose, doublet of white satin, twelve shirts of lawn." He'll not pay it to-day, good mercer !

TRADESMAN.

How, master Gaspar ? When I was assured of the gold on delivery ? If it be a *credit* account, look you, there must be a new bill. The charge is for ready money.

SERVANT.

Tut—tut—man, you know not whom you serve. My master is as likely to overpay you if you are civil, as to keep you a year out of your money if you push him when he is cross'd.

TRADESMAN.

Why, this is the humor of a spendthrift, not the careful way of a usurer.

SERVANT.

Usurer! humph. Well, it may be he is—to the rich! But the heart of the Signor Tortesa, let me tell you, is like the bird's wing—the dark side is turned upwards. To those who look up to him he shows neither spot nor stain! Hark! I hear his wheels in the court. Step to the ante-room—for he has that on his hands to-day which may make him impatient. Quick! Give way! I'll bring you to him if I can find a time.

TORTESA, (*speaking without.*)

What ho! Gaspar!

SERVANT.

Signor!

TORTESA.

My keys! Bring me my keys!

[Enter Tortesa, followed by Count Falcone.]

Come in, Count.

FALCONE.

You're well lodged.

TORTESA.

The Duke waits for you
To get to horse. So, briefly, there's the deed!
You have your lands back, and your daughter's mine—
So ran the *bargain!*

FALCONE, (*coldly.*)

She's *betroth'd*, Sir, to you !

TORTESA.

Not a half hour since, and you hold the parchment !

A free transaction, see you !—for you're *paid*,

And I'm but *promised* !

FALCONE, (*aside.*)

(What a slave is this,

To give my daughter to ! My daughter ? Psha !

I'll think but of my lands, my precious *lands* !)

Sir, the Duke sets forth—

TORTESA.

Use no ceremony !

Yet stay ! A word ! Our nuptials follow quick

On your return ?

FALCONE.

That hour, if it so please you !

TORTESA.

And what's the bargain if her humor change ?

FALCONE.

The lands are your's again—'tis understood so.

TORTESA.

Yet, still a word ! You leave her with her maids.

I have a right in her by this betrothal.

Seal your door up till you come back again !

I'd have no foplings tampering with my wife !

None of your painted jackdaws from the court,
Sneering and pitying her! My lord Falcone!
Shall she be private?

FALCONE, (*aside.*)

(Patience! for my lands!)

You shall control my door, sir, and my daughter!
Farewell now!

[*Exit Falcone.*

TORTESA.

Oh, omnipotence of money!

Ha! ha! Why, there's the haughtiest nobleman
That walks in Florence. *He!*—whom I have bearded—
Checked—made conditions to—shut up his daughter—
And all with *money!* They should pull down churches
And worship it! Had I been *poor*, that man
Would see me rot ere give his hand to me.

I—as I stand here—dress'd thus—looking thus—
The same in all—save money in my purse—
He would have scorn'd to let me come so near
That I could breathe on him! Yet, that were little—
For pride sometimes outdoes humility,
And your great man will please to be familiar,
To show how he can stoop. But halt you there!
He *has* a jewel that you may not name!
His *wife's* above you! You're no company
For his most noble *daughter!* You are brave—
'Tis nothing! comely—nothing! honorable—
You are a phoenix of all human virtues—
But, while your blood's mean, there's a frozen bar

Betwixt you and a *lady*, that will melt—
Not with religion—scarcely with the grave—
But like a mist, with *money* !

[Enter a Servant.]

SERVANT.

Please you, sir !

A tradesman waits to see you !

TORTESA.

Let him in ! [Exit Servant.

What need have I of forty generations
To build my name up ? I have bought with money
The fairest daughter of their haughtiest line !
Bought her ! Falcone's daughter for so much !
No wooing in't ! Ha ! ha ! I harp'd on that
Till my lord winced ! "My bargain !" still "my *bargain*!"

Nought of my *bride* ! Ha ! ha ! 'Twas excellent !

[Enter Tradesman.]

What's thy demand ?

TRADESMAN.

Ten ducats, please your lordship !

TORTESA.

Out on "your lordship !" There are *twelve* for ten !
Does a lord pay like that ? Learn some name sweeter
To my ears than "Your lordship !" I'm no lord !
Give me thy quittance ! Now, begone ! Who waits ?

SERVANT.

The Glover's daughter, please you, sir!

[Enter Zippa.]

TORTESA.

Come in,

My pretty neighbor! What! my bridal gloves!
Are they brought home?

ZIPPA.

The signor pays so well,

He's well served.

TORTESA.

Um! why, pertinently answered!
And yet, my pretty one, the words were sweeter
In any mouth than yours!

ZIPPA.

That's easy true!

TORTESA.

I would 'twere *liking* that had spurr'd your service—
Not money, Zippa, sweet! (*She presents her parcel to him, with a meaning air.*)

ZIPPA.

Your bridal gloves, sir!

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(What a fair shrew it is!) My gloves are paid for!
And will be thrown aside when worn a little.

ZIPPA.

What then, sir!

TORTESA.

Why, the bride is paid for, too !
And may be thrown aside, when worn a little !

ZIPPA.

You mock me now !

TORTESA.

You know Falcone's palace,
And lands, here, by Fiesole ? I bought them
For so much money of his creditors,
And gave them to him, in a plain, round bargain,
For his proud daughter ! What think you of that ?

ZIPPA.

What else but that you loved her !

TORTESA.

As I love
The thing I give my money for—no more !

ZIPPA.

You *mean* to love her ?

TORTESA.

'Twas not in the bargain !

ZIPPA.

Why, what a monster do you make yourself !
Have you no heart ?

TORTESA.

A loving one, for you !

Nay, never frown ! I marry this lord's daughter
To please a *devil* that inhabits me !
But there's an *angel* in me—not so strong—
And this last loves you !

ZIPPA.

Thanks for your weak angel !

I'd sooner 'twere the devil !

TORTESA.

Both were yours !

But for the burning fever that I have
To pluck at their proud blood.

ZIPPA.

Why, this poor lady

Cannot have harm'd you !

TORTESA.

Forty thousand times !

She's noble-born—there's one wrong in her cradle !
She's proud—why, that makes every pulse an insult—
Sixty a minute ! She's profuse in smiles
On those who are, to *me*, as stars to glow-worms—
So I'm disparaged ! I have pass'd her by,
Summer and winter, and she ne'er looked on me !
Her youth has been one tissue of contempt !
Her lovers, and her tutors, and her heart,
Taught her to scorn the low-born—that am *I*!
Would you have more ?

ZIPPA.

Why, this is moon-struck madness.

TORTESA.

I'd have her *mine*, for all this—jewell'd, perfumed—
Just as they've worshipped her at court—my slave!
They've mewed her breath up in their silken beds—
Blanch'd her with baths—fed her on delicate food—
Guarded the unsunn'd dew upon her skin—
For some *lord's* pleasure! If I could not get her,
There's a contempt in that, would make my forehead
Hot in my grave!

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Now Heaven forbid *my* fingers
Should make your bridal gloves!) Forgive me, Signor!
I'll take these back, so please you! (*Takes up the parcel again.*)

TORTESA, (*not listening to her.*)

But for this—

This devil at my heart, thou should'st have wedded
The richest commoner in Florence, Zippa!
Tell me thou wouldest!

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Stay! stay! A thought! If I
Could *feign* to love him, and so work on him
To put this match off, and at last to break it—
'Tis possible—aud so befriend this lady,
Whom, from my soul, I pity! Nay, I will!)
Signor Tortesa!

TORTESA.

You've been dreaming now,
How you would brave it in your lady-gear;
Was't not so?

ZIPPA.

No!

TORTESA.

What then?

ZIPPA.

I had a thought,
If I dare speak it.

TORTESA.

Nay, nay, speak it out!

ZIPPA.

I had forgot your riches, and I thought
How lost you were!

TORTESA.

How lost?

ZIPPA.

Your qualities,
Which far outweigh your treasure, thrown away.
On one who does not love you!

TORTESA.

Thrown away?

ZIPPA.

Is it not so to have a gallant shape,

And no eye to be proud on't—to be full
Of all that makes men dangerous to women,
And marry where you're scorn'd?

TORTESA.

There's reason there!

ZIPPA.

You're wise in meaner riches! You have gold,
'Tis out at interest!—lands, palaces,
They bring in rent. The gifts of nature only,
Worth to you, Signor, more than all your gold,
Lie profitless and idle. Your fine stature—

TORTESA.

Why—so, so!

ZIPPA.

Speaking eyes—

TORTESA.

Ay—passable!

ZIPPA.

Your voice, uncommon musical—

TORTESA.

Nay, *there*,

I think you may be honest!

ZIPPA.

And your look,

In all points lofty, like a gentleman!

(*Aside.*) (That last must choke him!)

TORTESA.

You've a judgment, Zippa,
That makes me wonder at you ! We are both
Above our breeding—I have often thought so—
And lov'd you—but to-day so more than ever,
That my revenge must have drunk up my life,
To still sweep over it. But when I think
Upon that proud lord and his scornful daughter—
I say not you're forgot—*myself am lost*—
And love and memory with me ! I must go
And visit her ! I'll see you to the door—
Come, Zippa, come !

ZIPPY, (*aside.*)

(I, too, will visit her !
You're a brave Signor, but against two women
You'll find your wits all wanted !)

TORTESA.

Come away !
I must look on my bargain ! my good bargain !
Ha ! ha ! my *bargain* !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

[*The Painter's Studio. Angelo painting. Tomaso in the fore-ground, arranging a meagre repast.*]

TOMASO.

A thrice-pick'd bone, a stale crust, and—excellent wa-
ter! Will you to breakfast, Master Angelo?

ANGELO.

Look on this touch, good Tomaso, if it be not life itself
—(*Draws him before his easel.*) Now, what think'st
thou?

TOMASO.

Um—fair! fair enough!

ANGELO.

No more?

TOMASO.

Till it mend my breakfast, I will never praise it! Fill
me up that *outline*, Master Angelo! (*Takes up the naked
bone.*) Color me that water! To what end dost thou
dabble there?

ANGELO.

I am weary of telling thee to what end. Have pa-
tience, Tomaso!

TOMASO, (*coaxingly.*)

Would'st thou but paint the goldsmith a sign, now, in good fair letters!

ANGELO.

Have I no genius for the art, think'st thou ?

TOMASO.

Thou! ha! ha!

ANGELO.

By thy laughing, thou wouldest say *no* !

TOMASO.

Thou a genius ! Look ! Master Angelo ! Have I not seen thee every day since thou wert no bigger than thy pencil ?

ANGELO.

And if thou hast ?

TOMASO.

Do I not know thee from crown to heel ? Dost thou not come in at that door as I do ?—sit down in that chair as I do ?—eat, drink, and sleep, as I do ? Dost thou not call me Tomaso, and I thee Angelo ?

ANGELO.

Well !

TOMASO.

Then how canst thou have genius ? Are there no marks ? Would I clap thee on the back, and say good

morrow ? Nay, look thee ! would I stand here telling thee in my wisdom what thou art, if thou wert a genius ? Go to, Master Angelo ! I love thee well, but thou art comprehensible !

ANGELO.

But think'st thou never of my works, Tomaso ?

TOMASO.

Thy works ! Do I not grind thy paints ? Do I not see thee take up thy palette, place thy foot thus, and dab here, dab there ? I tell thee thou hast never done stroke yet, I could not take the same brush and do after thee. Thy works, truly !

ANGELO.

How think'st thou would Donatello paint, if he were here ?

TOMASO.

Donatello ! I will endeavor to show thee ! (*Takes the palette and brush with a mysterious air.*) The picture should be there ! His pencil, (*throws down Angelo's pencil, and seizes a broom,*) his pencil should be as long as this broom ! He should raise it thus—with his eyes rolling thus—and with his body thrown back thus !

ANGELO.

What then ?

TOMASO.

Then he should see something in the air—a sort of a

hm—ha—r—r—rrrr— (you understand.) And he first strides off here and looks at it—then he strides off there and looks at it—then he looks at his long brush—then he makes a dab ! dash ! flash ! (*Makes three strokes across Angelo's picture.*)

ANGELO.

Villain, my picture ! Tomaso ! (*seizes his sword.*) With thy accursed broom thou hast spoiled a picture Donatello could ne'er have painted ! Say thy prayers, for, by the Virgin !—

TOMASO.

Murder ! murder ! help ! Oh, my good master ! Oh, my kind master !

ANGELO.

Wilt say thy prayers, or die a sinner ? Quick ! or thou'rt dead ere 'tis thought on !

TOMASO.

Help ! help ! mercy ! oh mercy !

[Enter the Duke hastily, followed by Falcone and attendants.]

DUKE.

Who calls so loudly ? What ! drawn swords at mid-day ! Disarm him ! Now, what mad-cap youth art thou ?

(To Angelo,)

To fright this peaceful artist from his toil ?
Rise up, sir ! (To Tomaso.)

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(Could my luckless star have brought
The Duke here at no other time!)

DUKE, (*looking round on the pictures.*)

Why, here's

Matter worth stumbling on ! By Jove, a picture
Of admirable work ! Look here, Falcone !
Did'st think there was a hand unknown in Florence
Could lay on color with a skill like this ?

TOMASO, (*aside to Angelo.*)

Did'st thou hear that ?

(*Duke and Falcone admire the pictures in dumb show.*)

ANGELO, (*aside to Tomaso.*)

(The pallette's on thy thumb—
Swear 'tis thy work !)

TOMASO.

Mine, master ?

ANGELO.

Seest thou not

The shadow of my fault will fall upon it
While I stand here a culprit ? The Duke loves thee
As one whom he has chanc'd to serve at need,
And kindness mends the light upon a picture,
I know that well !

FALCONE, (*to Tomaso.*)

The Duke would know your name, Sir !

TOMASO, (*as Angelo pulls him by the sleeve.*)

Tom—Angelo, my lord !

DUKE, (*to Falcone.*)

We've fallen here
Upon a treasure !

FALCONE.

'Twas a lucky chance
That led you in, my lord !

DUKE.

I blush to think
That I might ne'er have found such excellence
But for a chance cry, thus ! Yet now 'tis found
I'll cherish it, believe me.

FALCONE.

'Tis a duty
Your Grace is never slow to.

DUKE.

I've a thought—
If you'll consent to it ?

FALCONE.

Before 'tis spoken,
My gracious liege !

DUKE.

You know how well my duchess
Loves your fair daughter. Not as maid of honor

Lost to our service, but as parting child,
We grieve to lose her.

FALCONE.

My good lord!

DUKE.

Nay, nay—

She is betroth'd now, and you needs must wed her!
My thought was, to surprise my grieving duchess
With a resemblance of your daughter, done
By this rare hand, here. 'Tis a thought well found,
You'll say it is!

FALCONE, (*hesitating.*)

Your Grace is bound away
On a brief journey. Were't not best put off
Till our return?

DUKE, (*laughing.*)

I see you fear to let
The sun shine on your rose-bud till she bloom
Fairly in wedlock. But this painter, see you,
Is an old man, of a poor, timid bearing,
And may be trusted to look close upon her.
Come, come! I'll have my way! Good Angelo,

(*To Tomaso.*)

A pen and ink! And you, my lord Falcone!
Write a brief missive to your gentle daughter
T' admit him privately.

FALCONE.

I will, Duke.

[*Writes.*

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(Now

Shall I go back or forwards ? If he writes
Admit this Angelo, why, I am he,
 And that rare phœnix, hidden from the world,
 Sits to my burning pencil. She's a beauty
 Without a parallel, they say in Florence.
 Her picture 'll be remembered ! Let the Duke
 Rend me with horses, it shall ne'er be said
 I dared not pluck at Fortune !)

TOMASO, (*aside to Angelo.*)

Signor !

ANGELO.

(Hush !

Betray me, and I'll kill thee !)

DUKE.

Angele !

ANGELO, (*aside to Tomaso.*)

Speak, or thou diest !

TOMASO, (*to the Duke.*)

My lord !

DUKE.

Thou hast grown old

In the attainment of an excellence

Well worth thy time and study. The clear touch,
Won only by the patient toil of years,
Is on your fair works yonder.

TOMASO, (*astonished.*)

Those, my lord !

DUKE.

I shame I never saw them until now,
But here's a new beginning. Take this missive
From Count Falcone to his peerless daughter.
I'd have a picture of her for my palace.
Paint me her beauty as I know you can,
And as you do it well, my favor to you
Shall make up for the past.

TOMASO, (*as Angelo pulls his sleeve.*)

Your Grace is kind !

DUKE.

For this rude youth, name you his punishment !

(*Turns to Angelo.*)

His sword was drawn upon an unarm'd man.
He shall be fined, or, as you please, imprisoned.
Speak!

TOMASO.

If your Grace would bid him pay—

DUKE.

What sum ?

TOMASO.

Some twenty flasks of wine, my gracious liege,

If it so please you. 'Tis a thriftless servant
 I keep for love I bore to his dead father.
 But all his faults are nothing to a thirst
 That sucks my cellar dry !

DUKE.

He's well let off!
 Write out a bond to pay of your first gains
 The twenty flasks !

ANGELO.

Most willingly, my liege. [*Writes.*

DUKE, (*to Tomaso.*)

Are you content ?

TOMASO.

Your Grace, I am !

DUKE.

Come then !

Once more to horse ! Nay, nay, man, look not black !
 Unless your daughter were a wine-flask, trust me
 There's no fear of the painter !

FALCONE.

So I think,
 And you shall rule me. 'Tis the roughest shell
 Hides the good pearl. Adieu, Sir! (*to Tomaso.*)

[*Exeunt Duke and Falcone.*

(*Angelo seizes the missive from Tomaso, and strides up and down the stage, reading it exultingly. After*

looking at him a moment, Tomaso does the same with the bond for the twenty flasks.)

ANGELO.

Give the letter!

Oh, here is golden opportunity—
The ladder at my foot, the prize above,
And angels beckoning upwards. I will paint
A picture now, that in the eyes of men
Shall live like loving daylight. They shall cease
To praise it for the constant glory of it.
There's not a stone built in the palace wall
But shall let thro' the light of it, and Florence
Shall be a place of pilgrimage for ever
To see the work of low-born Angelo.
Oh that the world were made without a night,
That I could toil while in my fingers play
This dexterous lightning, wasted so in sleep.
I'll out, and muse how I shall paint this beauty,
So, wile the night away.

[Exit.

TOMASO, (*coming forward with his bond.*)

Prejudice aside, that is a pleasant-looking piece of paper! (*Holds it off, and regards it with a pleased air.*) Your bond *to pay*, now, is an ill-visaged rascal—you would know him across a church—nay—with the wind fair, *smell* him a good league! But this has, in some sort, a smile. It is not like other paper. It reads mellifluously. Your name is in the right end of it for music. Let me dwell upon it! (*Unfolds it, and reads*) “*I, To-*

*maso, promise to pay"—stay! "I, Tomaso—I Tomaso promise to pay to Angelo my master twenty flasks of wine!" (Rubs his eyes, and turns the note over and over.) There's a damnable twist in it that spoils all. "ITomaso"—why, that's *I*. And "I promise to pay"—Now, I promise no such thing! (Turns it upside down, and, after trying in vain to alter the reading, tears it in two.) There are some men that cannot write ten words in their own language without a blunder. Out, filthy scraps. If the Glover's daughter have not compassion upon me, I die of thirst! I'll seek her out! A pest on ignorance!*

(Pulls his hat sulkily over his eyes, and walks off.)

SCENE III.

[*An Apartment in the Falcone Palace. Angelo discovered listening.*]

ANGELO.

Did I hear footsteps? (*He listens.*) Fancy plays me tricks

In my impatience for this lovely wonder!

That window's to the north! The light falls cool.

I'll set my easel here, and sketch her—Stay !
How shall I do that ? Is she proud or sweet ?
Will she sit silent, or converse and smile ?
Will she be vexed or pleased to have a stranger
Pry through her beauty for the soul that's in it ?
Nay, then I heard a footstep—she is here !

(Enter Isabella, reading her father's missive.)

ISABELLA.

“ The duke would have your picture for the duchess
Done by this rude man, Angelo ! Receive him
With modest privacy, and let your kindness
Be measured by his merit, not his garb.”

ANGELO.

Fair lady !

ISABELLA.

Who speaks ?

ANGELO.

Angelo !

ISABELLA.

You've come, Sir,
To paint a dull face, trust me !

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(Beautiful,

Beyond all dreaming !)

ISABELLA.

I've no smiles to show you,
Not ev'n a mock one ! Shall I sit ?

ANGELO.

No, lady !

I'll steal your beauty while you move, as well !
So you but breathe, the air still brings to me
That which outdoes all pencilling.

ISABELLA, (*walking apart.*)

His voice

Is not a rude one. What a fate is mine,
When ev'n the chance words on a poor youth's tongue,
Contrasted with the voice which I should love,
Seems rich and musical !

ANGELO, (*to himself, as he draws.*)

How like a swan,

Drooping his small head to a lily-cup,
She curves that neck of pliant ivory !
I'll paint her thus !

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

Forgetful where he is,
He thinks aloud. This is, perhaps, the rudeness
My father fear'd might anger me.

ANGELO.

What color

Can match the clear red of those glorious lips ?
Say it were possible to trace the arches,
Shaped like the drawn bow of the god of love—
How tint them, after ?

ISABELLA.

Still, he thinks not of me,
But murmurs to his picture. 'Twere sweet praise,
Were it a lover whispering it. I'll listen,
As I walk, still.

ANGELO.

They say, a cloudy veil
Hangs ever at the crystal-gate of heaven,
To bar the issue of its blinding glory.
So droop those silken lashes to an eye
Mortal could never paint !

ISABELLA.

There's flattery,
Would draw down angels !

ANGELO.

Now, what alchymy
Can mock the rose and lily of her cheek !
I must look closer on't ! (*Advancing.*) Fair lady, please
you,
I'll venture to your side.

ISABELLA.

Sir !

ANGELO, (*examining her cheek.*)

There's a mixture
Of white and red here, that defeats my skill.
If you'll forgive me, I'll observe an instant,

How the bright blood and the transparent pearl
Melt to each other !

ISABELLA, (*receding from him.*)

You're too free, Sir !

ANGELO, (*with surprise.*)

Madam !

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

And yet, I think not so. He must look on it,
To paint it well.

ANGELO.

Lady ! the daylight's precious !
Pray you, turn to me ! In my study, here,
I've tried to fancy how that ivory shoulder
Leads the white light off from your arching neck,
But cannot, for the envious sleeve that hides it.
Please you, displace it !

(*Raises his hand to the sleeve.*)

ISABELLA.

Sir, you are too bold !

ANGELO.

Pardon me, lady ! Nature's masterpiece
Should be beyond your hiding, or my praise !
Were you less marvellous, I were too bold ;
But there's a pure divinity in beauty,
Which the true eye of art looks on with reverence,
Though, like the angels, it were all unclad !
You have no right to hide it !

ISABELLA.

How? No right?

ANGELO.

'Tis the religion of our art, fair madam !
That, by oft looking on the type divine
In which we first were moulded, men remember
The heav'n they're born to ! You've an errand here,
To show how look the angels. But, as Vestals
Cherish the sacred fire, yet let the priest
Light his lamp at it for a thousand altars,
So is your beauty unassailed, though I
Ravish a copy for the shut-out world !

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

Here is the wooing that should win a maid !
Bold, yet respectful—free, yet full of honor !
I never saw a youth with gentler eyes ;
I never heard a voice that pleased me more ;
Let me look on him ?

(Enter *Tortesa*, unperceived.)

ANGELO.

In a form like yours,
All parts are perfect, madam ! yet, unseen,
Impossible to fancy. With your leave
I'll see your hand unglov'd.

ISABELLA, (*removing her glove.*)

I have no heart
To keep it from you, signor ! There it is !

ANGELO, (*taking it in his own.*)

Oh God ! how beautiful thy works may be !
 Inimitably perfect ! Let me look
 Close on the tracery of these azure veins !
 With what a delicate and fragile thread
 They weave their subtle mesh beneath the skin,
 And meet, all blushing, in these rosy nails !
 How soft the texture of these tapering fingers !
 How exquisite the wrist ! How perfect all !

(*Tortesa rushes forward.*)

TORTESA.

Now have I heard enough ! Why, what are you,
 To palm the hand of my betrothed bride
 With this licentious freedom ?

(*Angelo turns composedly to his work.*)

And you, madam !

With a first troth scarce cold upon your lips—
 Is this your chastity ?

ISABELLA.

My father's roof

Is over me ! I'm not your wife !

TORTESA.

Bought ! paid for !

The wedding toward—have I no right in you ?
 Your father, at my wish, bade you be private ;
 Is this obedience ?

ISABELLA.

Count Falcone's will

Has, to his daughter, ever been a law;
This, in prosperity—and now, when chance
Frowns on his broken fortunes, I were dead
To love and pity, were not soul and body
Spent for his smallest need! I did consent
To wed his ruthless creditor for this!
I would have sprung into the sea, the grave,
As questionless and soon! My *troth* is yours!
But I'm not wedded yet, and, till I am,
The hallowed honor that protects a maid
Is round me, like a circle of bright fire!
A savage would not cross it—nor shall you!
I'm mistress of my presence. Leave me, Sir!

TORTESA.

There's a possession of some lordly acres
Sold to Falcone for that lily hand!
The deed's delivered, and the hand's my own!
I'll see that no man looks on't.

ISABELLA.

Shall a lady
Bid you begone twice?

TORTESA.

Twenty times, if't please you!

(*She looks at Angelo, who continues tranquilly painting.*)

ISABELLA.

Does he not wear a sword ? Is he a coward,
That he can hear this man heap insult on me,
And ne'er fall on him ?

TORTESA.

Lady ! to your chamber !

I have a touch to give this picture, here,
But want no model for't. Come, come.

(*Offers to take her by the arm.*)

ISABELLA.

Stand back !

Now, will he see this wretch lay hands on me,
And never speak ? He cannot be a coward !
No, no ! some other reason—not a coward !
I could not love a coward !

TORTESA.

If you will,

Stay where you're better miss'd—'tis at your pleasure ;
I'll hew your kisses from the saucy lips
Of this bold painter—look on't, if you will !
And first, to mar his picture !

(*He strikes at the canvass, when Angelo suddenly draws, attacks and disarms him.*)

ANGELO.

Hold ! What wouldst thou ?

Fool ! madman ! dog ! What wouldst thou with my picture ?

Speak!—But thy life would not bring back a ray
Of precious daylight, and I cannot waste it!
Begone! begone!

(*Throws Tortesa's sword from the window, and returns to his picture.*)

I'll back to paradise!

'Twas this touch that he marr'd! So! fair again!

TORTESA, (*going out.*)

I'll find you, Sir, when I'm in cooler blood!
And, madam, *you!* or Count Falcone for you,
Shall rue this scorn!

[*Exit.*

ISABELLA, (*looking at Angelo.*)

Lost in his work once more!

I shall be jealous of my very picture!
Yet one who can forget his passions so—
Peril his life, and, losing scarce a breath,
Turn to his high, ambitious toil again—
Must have a heart for whose belated waking
Queens might keep vigil!

ANGELO.

Twilight falls, fair lady!

I must give o'er! Pray heaven, the downy wing
Of its most loving angel guard your beauty!
Good night!

(*Goes out with a low reverence.*)

ISABELLA.

Good night!

(She looks after him a moment, and then walks thoughtfully off the stage.)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

[*Tomaso discovered sitting at his supper, with a bottle of water before him.*]

TOMASO.

Water! (*Sips a little with a grimace.*) I think, since the world was drowned in it, it has tasted of sinners. The pious throat refuses it. Other habits grow pleasant with use—but the drinking of water lessens the liking of it. Now, why should not some rivers run wine? There are varieties in the *eatables*—will any wise man tell me why there should be but one *drinkable* in nature—and that water? My mind's made up—it's the curse of transgression.

(*A rap at the door.*)

Come in!

[*Enter Zippa, with a basket and bottle.*]

ZIPPA.

Good even, Tomaso!

TOMASO.

Zippa! I had a presentiment—

ZIPPA.

What ! of my coming ?

TOMASO.

No—of thy bottle ! Look ! I was stinting myself in water to leave room !

ZIPPA.

The reason is superfluous. There would be room in thee for wine, if thou wert drowned in the sea.

TOMASO.

God forbid !

ZIPPA.

What—that thou shouldst be drowned ?

TOMASO.

No—but that being drowned, I should have room for wine.

ZIPPA.

Why, now ?—why ?

TOMASO.

If I had room for wine, I should want it—and to want wine in the bottom of the sea, were a plague of Sodom.

ZIPPA.

Where's Angelo ?

TOMASO.

What's in thy bottle ? Show ! Show !

ZIPPA.

Tell me where he is—what he has done since yesterday—what thought on—what said—how he has looked, and if he still loves me; and when thou art thirsty with truth-telling—(dry work for such a liar as thou art,)—thou shalt learn what is in my bottle!

TOMASO.

Nay—learning be hanged!

ZIPPA.

So says the fool!

TOMASO.

Speak advisedly! Was not Adam blest till he knew good and evil?

ZIPPA.

Right for once.

TOMASO.

Then he lost Paradise by too much learning.

ZIPPA.

Ha! ha! Hadst thou been consulted, we should still be there!

TOMASO.

Snug! I would have had my inheritance in a small vineyard!

ZIPPA.

Tell me what I ask of thee.

TOMASO.

Thou shalt have a piece of news for a cup of wine—
pay and take—till thy bottle be dry !

ZIPPA.

Come on, then ! and if thou must lie, let it be flattery.
That's soonest forgiven.

TOMASO.

And last forgotten ! Pour out ! (*She pours a cup full, and gives him.*) The Duke was here yesterday.—

ZIPPA.

Lie the first !

TOMASO.

And made much of my master's pictures.

ZIPPA.

Nay—that would have made two good lies. Thou'rt prodigal of stuff !

TOMASO.

Pay two glasses, then, and square the reckoning !

ZIPPA.

Come ! Lie the third !

TOMASO.

What wilt thou wager it's a lie, that Angelo is painting a court lady for the duchess ?

ZIPPA.

Oh Lord ! Take the bottle ! They say there's truth

in wine—but as truth is impossible to thee, drink thyself, at least, down to probabilities !

TOMASO.

Look you there ! When was virtue encouraged ? Here have I been telling God's truth, and it goes for a lie. Hang virtue ! Produce thy cold chicken, and I'll tell thee a lie for the wings and two for the side-bones and breast. (*Offers to take the chicken.*)

ZIPPA.

Stay ! stay ! It's for thy master, thou glutton !

TOMASO.

Who's ill a-bed, and forbid meat. (*Angelo enters.*) I would have told thee so before, but feared to grieve thee. (*She would have a lie !*)

ZIPPA, (*starting up.*)

Ill ! Angelo ill ! Is he *very* ill, good Tomaso ?

TOMASO.

Very ! (*Seizes the chicken, as Angelo claps him on the shoulder.*)

ANGELO.

Will thy tricks never end ?

TOMASO.

Ehem ! ehem ! (*Thrusters the chicken into his pocket.*)

ANGELO.

How art thou, Zippa ?

ZIPPA.

Well, dear Angelo! (*Giving him her hand.*) And thou wert not ill, indeed?

ANGELO.

Never better, by the test of a true hand! I have done work to-day, I trust will be remembered!

ZIPPA.

Is it true it's a fair lady?

ANGELO.

A lady with a face so angelical, Zippa, that—

ZIPPA.

That thou didst forget mine?

ANGELO.

In truth, I forgot there was such a thing as a world, and so forgot all in it. I was in heaven!

TOMASO, (*aside, as he picks the leg of the chicken.*)

(Prosperity is excellent white-wash, and her love is an old score!)

ZIPPA, (*bitterly.*)

I am glad thou wert pleased, Angelo!—very glad!

TOMASO, (*aside.*)

(Glad as an eel to be fried.)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

("In Heaven," was he! If I pay him not that, may

my brains rot! By what right, loving me, is he "in Heaven" with another?

TOMASO, (*aside.*)

(No more wine and cold chicken from that quarter!)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Tortesa loves me, and my false game may be played true. If he wed not Falcone's daughter, he will wed me, and so I am revenged on this fickle Angelo! I have the heart to do it!

ANGELO.

What dost thou muse on, Zippa?

ZIPPA.

On one I love better than thee, Signor!

ANGELO.

What, angry? (*Seizes his pencil.*) Hold there till I sketch thee! By Jove, thou'rt not half so pretty when thou'rt pleased!

ZIPPA.

Adieu, Signor! your mockery will have an end!
(*Goes out with an angry air.*)

ANGELO.

What! gone? Nay, I'll come with thee, if thou'rt in earnest! What whim's this? (*Takes up his hat.*) Ho, Zippa! (*Follows in pursuit.*)

TOMASO, (*pulls the chicken from his pocket.*)

Come forth, last of the chickens! She will ne'er

forgive him, and so ends the succession of cold fowl! One glass to its memory, and then to bed! (*Drinks, and takes up the candle.*) A woman is generally unsafe—but a jealous one spoils all confidence in drink.

[*Exit, muttering.*

SCENE II.

[*An Apartment in the Falcone Palace. Enter Servant, shewing in Zippa.*]

SERVANT.

Wait here, if't please you !

ZIPPA.

Thanks! (*Exit Servant.*) My heart misgives me!
'Tis a bold errand I am come upon—
And I a stranger to her! Yet, perchance
She needs a friend—the proudest do sometimes—
And mean ones may be welcome. Look! she comes!

ISABELLA.

You wished to speak with me ?

ZIPPA.

I did—but now
My memory is crept into my eyes;

I cannot think for gazing on your beauty !
Pardon me, lady !

ISABELLA.

You're too fair yourself
To find my face a wonder. Speak ! Who are you ?

ZIPPA.

Zippa, the Glover's daughter, and your friend !

ISABELLA.

My friend ?

ZIPPA.

I said so. You're a noble lady
And I a low-born maid—yet I have come
To offer you my friendship.

ISABELLA.

This seems strange !

ZIPPA.

I'll make it less so, if you'll give me leave.

ISABELLA.

You'll please me !

ZIPPA.

Briefly—for the time is precious
To me as well as you—I have a lover,
A true one, as I think, who yet finds boldness
To seek your hand in marriage.

ISABELLA.

How ? We're rivals !

ZIPPA.

Tortesa loves me, and for that I'd wed him.
Yet I'm not sure I love him more than you—
And you must hate him.

ISABELLA.

So far freely spoken—
What was your thought in coming to me now ?

ZIPPA.

To mar your match with him, and so make mine !

ISABELLA.

Why, free again ! Yet, as you love him not
'Tis strange you seek to wed him !

ZIPPA.

Oh no, madam !
Woman loves once unthinkingly. The heart
Is born with her first love, and, new to joy,
Breathes to the first wind its delicious sweetness,
But gets none back ! So comes its bitter wisdom !
When next we think of love, 'tis *who loves us !*
I said Tortesa loved me !

ISABELLA.

You shall have him
With all my heart ! See—I'm your friend already !
And friends are equals. So approach, and tell me,
What was this first love like, that you discourse
So prettily upon ?

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Dear Angelo !

'Twill be a happiness to talk of him !)
I loved a youth, kind madam ! far beneath
The notice of your eyes, unknown and poor.

ISABELLA.

A handsome youth ?

ZIPPA.

Indeed, I thought him so !
But you would not. I loved him out of pity ;
No one cared for him.

ISABELLA.

Was he so forlorn ?

ZIPPA.

He was our neighbor, and I knew his toil
Was almost profitless ; and 'twas a pleasure
To fill my basket from our wasteful table,
And steal, at eve, to sup with him.

ISABELLA, (*smiling.*)

Why, that

Was charity, indeed ! He loved you for it—
Was't not so ?

ZIPPA.

He was like a brother to me—
The kindest brother sister ever had.
I built my hopes upon his gentleness :

He had no other quality to love.
 Th' ambitious change--so do the fiery-hearted :
 The lowly are more constant.

ISABELLA.

And yet, he
 Was, after all, a false one ?

ZIPPA.

Nay, dear lady !
 I'll check my story there ! 'Twould end in anger,
 Perhaps in tears. If I am not too bold,
 Tell me, in turn, of all your worshippers—
 Was there ne'er one that pleased you ?

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Now could I
 Prate to this humble maid, of Angelo,
 Till matins rang again !) My gentle Zippa !
 I have found all men prompt to talk of love,
 Save only one. I will confess to you,
 For that one could I die ! Yet, so unlike
 Your faithless lover must I draw his picture,
 That you will wonder how such opposites
 Could both be loved of women.

ZIPPA.

Was he fair,
 Or brown ?

ISABELLA.

In truth, I marked not his complexion.

ZIPPA.

Tall ?

ISABELLA.

That I know not.

ZIPPA.

Well—robust, or slight ?

ISABELLA.

I cannot tell, indeed ! I heard him speak—
Looked in his eyes, and saw him calm and angered—
And see him now, in fancy, standing there—
Yet know not limb or feature !

ZIPPA.

You but saw

A shadow, lady !

ISABELLA.

Nay—I saw a *soul* !

His eyes were light with it. The forehead lay
Above their fires in calm tranquillity,
As the sky sleeps o'er thunder-clouds. His look
Was mixed of these—earnest, and yet subdued—
Gentle, yet passionate—sometimes half god-like
In its command, then mild and sweet again,
Like a stern angel taught humility !
Oh ! when he spoke, my heart stole out to him !
There was a spirit-echo in his voice—
A sound of thought—of under-playing music—

As if, before it ceased in human ears,
The echo was caught up in fairy-land !

ZIPPA.

Was he a courtier, madam ?

ISABELLA.

He's as lowly

In birth and fortunes, as your false one, Zippa !
Yet rich in genius, and of that ambition,
That he'll outlast nobility with fame.

Have you seen such a man ?

ZIPPA.

Alas ! sweet lady !

My life is humble, and such wondrous men
Are far above *my* knowing. I could wish
To see one ere I died !

ISABELLA.

You *shall*, believe me !

But while we talk of lovers, we forget
In how brief time you are to win a husband.
Come to my chamber, Zippa, and I'll see
How with your little net you'll snare a bird
Fierce as this rude Tortesa !

ZIPPA. .

We will find

A way, dear lady, if we die for it !

ISABELLA.

Shall we ? Come with me, then !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

[*An Apartment in the Falcone Palace. Tortesa alone waiting the return of the Count.*]

TORTESA, (*musing.*)

There are some luxuries too rich for purchase.
Your *soul*, 'tis said, will buy them, of the devil—
Money's too poor! What would I not give, now,
That I could *scorn* what I can hate and ruin!
Scorn is the priceless luxury! In heaven,
The angels *pity*. They are blest to do so;
For, pitying, they look down. We do't by *scorn*!
There lies the privilege of noble birth!—
The jewel of that bloated toad is *scorn*!
You may take all else from him. You—being mean—
May get his palaces—may wed his daughter—
Sleep in his bed—have all his peacock menials
Watching your least glance, as they did “my lord's;”
And, well-possess'd thus, you may pass him by
On his own horse; and while the vulgar crowd
Gape at your trappings, and scarce look on him—
He, in his rags, and starving for a crust—
You'll feel his *scorn*, through twenty coats of mail,
Hot as a sun-stroke! Yet there's something for us!
Th' archangel fiend, when driven forth from heaven,
Put on the serpent, and found sweet revenge
Trailing his slime through Eden! So will I!

[Enter Falcone, booted and spurred.]

FALCONE.

Good morrow, signor,

TORTESA.

Well-arrived, my lord !

How sped your riding ?

FALCONE.

Fairly ! Has my daughter
Left you alone ?

TORTESA.

She knows that I am here.
Nay—she'll come presently ! A word in private,
Since we're alone, my lord !

FALCONE.

I listen, signor !

TORTESA.

Your honor, as I think, outweighs a bond ?

FALCONE.

'Twas never questioned.

TORTESA.

On your simple word,
And such more weight as hangs upon the troth
Of a capricious woman, I gave up
A deed of lands to you.

FALCONE.

You did.

TORTESA.

To be

Forfeit, and mine again—the match not made ?

FALCONE.

How if *you* marr'd it ?

TORTESA.

I? I'm not a boy !

What I would yesterday, I will to-day !

I'm not a lover—

FALCONE.

How ? So near your bridal,
And not a lover ? Shame, sir !

TORTESA.

My lord count,

You take me for a fool !

FALCONE.

Is't like a fool
To love a high-born lady, and your bride ?

TORTESA.

Yes ; a thrice-sodden fool—if it were I !
I'm not a mate for her—you know I am not !
You know that, in her heart, your haughty daughter
Scorns me—ineffably !

FALCONE.

You seek occasion
To slight her, signor !

TORTESA.

No ! I'll marry her
If all the pride that cast down Lucifer
Lie in her bridal-ring ! But, mark me still !
I'm not one of your humble citizens,
To bring my money-bags and make you rich—
That, when we walk together, I may take
Your shadow for my own ! These limbs are clay—
Poor, common clay, my lord ! And she that weds me,
Comes down to my estate.

FALCONE.

By this you mean not
To shut her from her friends ?

TORTESA.

You'll see your daughter
By coming to my house—not else ! D'ye think
I'll have a carriage to convey my wife
Where she will hear me laughed at ?—buy fine horses
To prance a measure to the mocking jeers
Of fools that ride with her ? Nay—keep a table
Where I'm the skeleton that mars the feast ?
No, no—no, no !

FALCONE, (*aside.*)

(With half the provocation,

I would, ere now, have struck an emperor !
But baser pangs make this endurable.
I'm poor—so patience !) What was it beside
You would have said to me ?

TORTESA.

But this : Your daughter
Has, in your absence, covered me with scorn !
We'll not talk of it—if the match goes on,
I care not to remember it ! (Aside.) (She shall—
And bitterly !)

FALCONE, (*aside.*)

(My poor, poor Isabella !
The task was too much !)

TORTESA.

There's a cost of feeling—
You may not think it much—I reckon it
A thousand pounds per day—in playing thus
The suitor to a lady cramm'd with pride !
I've writ you out a bond to pay me for it !
See here !—to pay me for my shame and pains,
If I should lose your daughter for a wife,
A thousand pounds per day—dog cheap at that !
Sign it, my lord, or give me back my deeds,
And *traffic* cease between us !

FALCONE.

Is this earnest,
Or are you mad or trifling ? Do I not

Give you my daughter with an open hand?
Are you betroth'd, or no?

[Enter a Servant.]

Who's this?

SERVANT.

A page

Sent from the Duke.

FALCONE.

Admit him!

[Enter Page, with a letter.]

PAGE.

For my lord,

The Count Falcone.

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(In a moment more
I would have had a bond of such assurance
Her father on his knees should bid me take her.

(*Looking at Falcone, who smiles as he reads.*)
What glads him now?)

FALCONE.

You shall not have the bond!

TORTESA.

No? (*aside.*) (Here's a change! What hint from
Duke or devil
Stirs him to this?) My lord, 'twere best the bridal

Took place upon the instant. Is your daughter
Ready within ?

FALCONE.

You'll never wed my daughter!

[*Enter Isabella.*]

TORTESA.

My lord !

FALCONE.

She's fitlier mated ! Here she comes !
My lofty Isabella ! My fair child !
How dost thou, sweet ?

ISABELLA, (*embracing him.*)

Come home, and I not know it !
Art well ? I see thou art ! Hast ridden hard ?
My dear, dear father !

FALCONE.

Give me breath to tell thee
Some better news, my lov'd one !

ISABELLA.

Nay, the joy
To see you back again 's enough for now.
There can be no news better, and for this
Let's keep a holiday twixt this and sunset !
Shut up your letter, and come see my flowers,
And hear my birds sing, will you ?

FALCONE.

Look, my darling,
Upon this first! (*Holds up the letter.*)

ISABELLA.

No! you shall tell me all
You and the Duke did—where you slept, where ate,
Whether you dream'd of me—and, now I think on't,
Found you no wild-flow'r's as you cross'd the mountain?

FALCONE.

My own bright child! (*Looks fondly upon her.*)

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

('Twill mar your joy, my lord!
To see the Glover's daughter in your palace,
And your proud daughter houseless!)

FALCONE, (*to Isabella.*)

You'll not hear
The news I have for you!

TORTESA, (*advancing.*)

Before you tell it,
I'll take my own again!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Tortesa here!) (*curtseys.*)
I crave your pardon, sir; I saw you not!
(Oh hateful monster!) (*aside.*)

FALCONE.

Listen to my news,

Signor Tortesa! It concerns you, trust me!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(More of this hateful marriage!)

TORTESA.

Tell it briefly,

My time is precious!

FALCONE.

Sir, I'll sum it up

In twenty words. The Duke has information,
By what means yet I know not, that my need
Spurs me to marry an unwilling daughter.
He bars the match!—redeems my lands and palace,
And has enrich'd the young Count Julian,
For whom he bids me keep my daughter's hand!
Kind, royal master! (*Reads the note to himself.*)

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Never!)

TORTESA, (*aside, with suppressed rage.*)

('Tis a lie!

He's mad, or plays some trick to gain the time—
Or there's a woman hatching deviltry!
We'll see.) (*Looks at Isabella.*)

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(I'll die first! Sold and taken back,
Then thrust upon a husband paid to take me!
To save my father I have weigh'd myself,

Heart, hand, and honor, against so much land !—
I—Isabella ! I'm nor hawk nor hound,
And, if I change my master, I will choose him !

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

She seems not over-pleased !

PAGE.

Your pardon, Count !
I wait your answer to the Duke !

FALCONE.

My daughter
Shall give it you herself. What sweet phrase have you,
Grateful and eloquent, to bear your thanks ?
Speak, Isabella !

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(There's but one way left !
Courage, poor heart, and think on Angelo !)

(*Advances suddenly to Tortesa.*)

Signor Tortesa !

TORTESA.

Madam !

ISABELLA.

There's my hand !
Is't yours, or no ?

TORTESA.

There was a troth between us !

ISABELLA.

Is't broke ?

TORTESA.

I have not broke it !

ISABELLA.

Then why stand you
Mute as a statue, when 'tis struck asunder
Without our wish or knowledge ? Would you be
Half so indifferent had you lost a horse ?
Am I worth having ?

TORTESA.

Is my life worth having ?

ISABELLA.

Then are you robb'd ! Look to it !

FALCONE.

Is she mad !

TORTESA.

You'll marry me ?

ISABELLA.

I will !

FALCONE.

By heaven you shall not !

What, shall my daughter wed a leprosy—
A bloated money-canker ? Leave her hand !
Stand from him, Isabella !

ISABELLA.

Sir ! you gave me
 This "leper" for a husband, three days gone ;
 I did not ask my heart if I could love him !
 I took him with the meekness of a child,
 Trusting my father ! I was shut up for him—
 Forc'd to receive no other company—
 My wedding-clothes made, and the match proclaim'd
 Through Florence !

FALCONE.

Do you love him ?—tell me quickly !

ISABELLA.

You never ask'd me that when I was bid
 To wed him !

FALCONE.

I am dumb !

TORTESA.

Ha ! ha ! well put !
 At him again, 'Bel ! Well ! I've had misgivings
 That there was food in me for ladies' liking.
 I've been too modest !

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Monster of disgust !)

FALCONE.

My daughter ! I would speak with you in private !
 Signor ! you'll pardon me.

ISABELLA.

Go you, dear father!
I'll follow straight,

[*Exit Falcone.*TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(She loiters for a kiss !
They're all alike ! The same trick woos them all !)
Come to me, 'Bel !

ISABELLA, (*coldly.*)

To-morrow at this hour
You'll find the priest here, and the bridesmaids waiting.
Till then, adieu !

[*Exit.*

TORTESA.

Hola ! what, gone ? Why, Bella !
Sweetheart ! I say ! So ! She would coy it with me !
Well, well, to-morrow ! 'Tis not long, and kisses
Pay interest by seconds ! There's a leg !
As she stood there, the calf shewed handsomely.
Faith 'tis a shapely one ! I wonder now,
Which of my points she finds most admirable !
Something I never thought on, like as not.
We do not see ourselves as others see us.
'Twould not surprise me now, if 'twere my beard—
My forehead ! I've a hand indifferent white !
Nay, I've been told my waist was neatly turn'd,
We *do not* see ourselves as others see us !
How goes the hour ? I'll home and fit my hose

To tie trim for the morrow. (*Going out.*) Hem! the
door's

Lofty. I like that! I will have mine raised.

Your low door makes one stoop!

[*Exit.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

[*Angelo discovered in his studio, painting upon the picture of Isabella.*]]

ANGELO.

My soul is drunk with gazing on this face.
I reel and faint with it. In what sweet world
Have I traced all its lineaments before ?
I know them. Like a troop of long-lost friends,
My pencil wakes them with its eager touch,
And they spring up, rejoicing, Oh, I'll gem
The heaven of Fame with my irradiate pictures,
Like kindling planets—but this glorious one
Shall be their herald, like the evening star,
First-lit, and lending of its fire to all.
The day fades—but the lamp burns on within me.
My bosom has no dark, no sleep, no change
To dream or calm oblivion. I work on
When my hand stops. The light tints fade. Good night,
Fair image of the fairest thing on earth,
Bright Isabella !

(Leans on the rod with which he guides his hand, and remains looking at his picture.)

[Enter Tomaso, with two bags of money.]

TOMASO.

For the most excellent painter, Angelo, two hundred ducats! The genius of my master flashes upon me. The duke's greeting and two hundred ducats! If I should not have died in my blindness but for this eye-water, may I be hanged. (Looks at Angelo.) He is studying his picture. What an air there is about him—lofty, unlike the vulgar! Two hundred ducats! (Observes Angelo's hat on the table.) It strikes me now that I can see genius in that hat. It is not like a common hat. Not like a bought hat. The rim turns to the crown with an intelligence. (Weighs the ducats in his hand.) Good heavy ducats. What it is to refresh the vision! I have looked round, ere now, in this very chamber, and fancied that the furniture expressed a melancholy dulness. When he hath talked to me of his pictures, I have seen the chairs smile. Nay, as if shamed to listen, the very table has looked foolish. Now, all about me expresseth a choice peculiarity—as you would say, how like a genius to have such chairs! What a painter-like table! Two hundred ducats!

ANGELO.

What hast thou for supper?

TOMASO.

Two hundred ducats, my great master!

ANGELO, (*absently.*)

A cup of wine! Wine, Tomaso! [Sits down.

TOMASO.

(So would the great Donatello have sat upon his chair!
His legs thus! His hand falling thus!) (*Aloud.*)
There is nought in the cellar but stale beer, my illustrious master!
(Now, it strikes me that his shadow is unlike another man's—of a *pink* tinge, somehow—yet that may be fancy.)

ANGELO.

Hast thou no money? Get wine, I say!

TOMASO.

I saw the duke in the market-place, who called me Angelo, (we shall rue that trick yet,) and with a gracious smile asked me if thou hadst paid the twenty flasks.

ANGELO, (*not listening.*)

Is there no wine?

TOMASO.

I said to his grace, no! Pray mark the sequel: In pity of my thirst, the duke sends me two—ahem!—one hundred ducats. Here they are!

ANGELO.

Didst thou say the wine was on the lees?

TOMASO.

With these *fifty* ducats we shall buy nothing but wine.
(He will be rich with fifty.)

ANGELO.

What saidst thou ?

TOMASO.

I spoke of *twenty* ducats sent thee by the duke. Wilt thou finger them ere one is spent ?

ANGELO.

I asked thee for wine—I am parched.

TOMASO.

Of these *ten* ducats, think'st thou we might spend one for a flask of better quality ?

ANGELO.

Lend me a ducat, if thou hast one, and buy wine presently. Go !

TOMASO.

I'll lend it thee, willingly, my illustrious master. It is my last, but as much mine as thine.

ANGELO.

Go ! Go !

TOMASO.

Yet wait ! There's a scrap of news. Falcone's daughter marries Tortesa, the usurer ? To-morrow is the bridal.

ANGELO.

How ?

TOMASO.

I learned it in the market-place ! There will be rare doings !

ANGELO.

Dog ! Villain ! Thou hast lied ! Thou dar'st not say it !

TOMASO.

Hey ! Art thou mad ? Nay—borrow thy ducat where thou canst ! I'll spend that's my own. Adieu, master !

(*Exit Tomaso, and enter Tortesa with a complacent smile.*)

ANGELO.

Ha !—well arrived !

(*Draws his sword.*

TORTESA.

Good eve, good Signor Painter.

ANGELO.

You struck me yesterday.

TORTESA.

I harmed your picture—

For which I'm truly sorry—but not you !

ANGELO.

Myself ! myself ! My picture is myself !

What are my bones that rot ? Is this my hand ?—

Is this my eye ?

TORTESA.

I think so.

ANGELO.

No, I say !

The hand and eye of Angelo are there !

There—there—(*Points to his pictures*)—immortal !

Wound me in the flesh,

I will forgive you upon fair excuse.

'Tis the earth round me—'tis my shell—my house ;

But in my picture lie my brain and heart—

My soul—my fancy. For a blow at these

There's no cold reparation. Draw, and quickly !

I'm in the mood to fight it to the death.

Stand on your guard !

TORTESA.

I will not fight with you.

ANGELO.

Coward !

TORTESA.

I'm deaf.

ANGELO.

Feel then !

(*Tortesa catches the blow as he strikes him, and coldly flings back his hand.*)

TORTESA.

Nay, strike me not !

I'll call the guard, and cry out like a woman.

ANGELO, (*turning from him contemptuously.*)

What scent of dog's meat brought me such a cur!

It is a whip I want, and not a sword.

TORTESA, (*folding his arms.*)

I have a use for life so far above
The stake you quarrel for, that you may choose
Your words to please yourself. They'll please me, too.
Yet you're in luck. I killed a man on Monday
For spitting on my *shadow*. Thursday's sun
Will dry the insult, though it light on *me* !

ANGELO.

Oh, subtle coward !

TORTESA.

I am what you will,
So I'm alive to marry on the morrow !
'Tis well, by Jupiter ! Shall you have power
With half a breath to pluck from me a wife !
Shall I, against a life as poor as yours—
Mine being precious as the keys of Heaven—
Set all upon a throw, and no odds neither ?
I know what honor is as well as you !
I know the weight and measure of an insult—
What it is worth to take or fling it back,
I have the hand to fight if I've a mind ;
And I've a heart to shut my sunshine in,
And lock it from the scowling of the world,
Though all mankind cry " Coward ! "

ANGELO.

Mouthing braggart !

TORTESA.

I came to see my bride, my Isabella !

Show me her picture ! (*Advances to look for it.*)

ANGELO.

Do but look upon 't,

By heaven's fair light, I'll kill you !

[*Draws.*

TORTESA.

Soft, she's mine !

She loves me ! and with that to make life precious,
I have the nerve to beat back Hercules,
If you were he !

ANGELO, (*attacking him.*)

Out ! Out ! thou shameless liar !

TORTESA, (*retreating on the defence.*)

Thy blows and words fall pointless ! Nay, thou'rt mad !
But I'll not harm thee for her picture's sake !

ANGELO.

Liar ! she hates thee !

(*Beats him off the stage and returns, closing the door
violently.*)

So ! once more alone !

(*Takes Isabella's picture from the easel, and replaces
it with Zippa's.*)

Back to the wall, deceitful loveliness !

And come forth, Zippa, fair in honest truth !

I'll make *thee* beautiful !

(*Takes his pencil and palette to paint.*)

[*A knock is heard.*]

Who knocks ! come in !

[*Enter Isabella, disguised as a monk.*]

ISABELLA.

Good Morrow, signor !

ANGELO, (*turning sharply to the monk.*)

There's a face, old monk,

Might stir your blood—ha ? You shall tell me, now,

Which of these heavenly features hides the soul !

There *is* one ! I have worked upon the picture

Till *my* brain's thick—I cannot see like you.

Where is't ?

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(A picture of the Glover's daughter !

What does he, painting *her* !) Is't for its *beauty*

You paint that face, sir ?

ANGELO.

Yes—th' immortal beauty !

Look here ! What see you in that face ? The skin—

ISABELLA.

Brown as a vintage-girl's !

ANGELO.

The mouth—

ISABELLA.

A good one

To eat and drink withal !

ANGELO.

The eye is—

ISABELLA.

Grey !

You'll buy a hundred like it for a penny !

ANGELO.

A hundred eyes ?

ISABELLA.

No. Hazel-nuts !

ANGELO.

The forehead—

How find you that ?

ISABELLA.

Why, made to match the rest !

I'll cut as good a face out of an apple—

For all that's fair in it !

ANGELO.

Oh, heaven, how dim

Were God's most blessed image did all eyes

Look on't like thine ! Is't by the red and white—

Is't by the grain and tincture of the skin—

Is't by the hair's gloss, or the forehead's arching,

You know the bright inhabitant ? I tell thee

The spark of their divinity in some

Lights up an *inward* face—so radiant,

The outward lineaments are like a veil

Floating before the sanctuary—forgot

In glimpses of the glory streaming through !

ISABELLA, (*mournfully.*)

Is Zippa's face so radiant?

ANGELO.

Look upon it!

You see thro' all the countenance she's *true*!

ISABELLA.

True to *you*, signor!

ANGELO.

To herself, old man!

Yet *once*, to *me* too! (*dejectedly.*)

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Once to him! Can Zippa
Have dared to love a man like Angelo!
I think she dare not. Yet if he, indeed,
Were the inconstant lover that she told of—
The youth who was “her neighbor!”) Please you, sig-
nor!

Was that fair maid your neighbor?

ANGELO.

Ay—the best!

A loving sister were not half so kind!
I never supp'd without her company.
Yet she was modest as an unsunn'd lily,
And bounteous as the constant perfume of it.

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

('Twas he indeed! Oh! what a fair outside

Has falsehood there! Yet stay! If it were *I*
 Who made him false to her? Alas, for honor,
 I must forgive him—tho' my lips are weary
 With telling Zippa how I thought him perjured!
 I cannot trust her more—I'll plot alone!)

(*Turns, and takes her own picture from the wall.*)

ISABELLA.

What picture's this, turned to the wall, good signor?

ANGELO.

A painted lie!

ISABELLA.

A lie!—nay—pardon me!
 I spoke in haste. Methought 'twas like a lady
 I'd somewhere seen!—a lady—Isabella!
 But she was true!

ANGELO.

Then 'tis not she I've drawn.
 For that's a likeness of as false a face
 As ever devil did his mischief under.

ISABELLA.

And yet methinks 'tis done most lovingly!
 You must have thought it fair to dwell so on it.

ANGELO.

Your convent has the picture of a saint
 Tempted, while praying, by the shape of woman.
 The painter knew that woman was the devil,
 Yet drew her like an angel!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(It is true

He praised my beauty as a painter may—
No more—in words. He praised me as he drew—
Feature by feature. But who calls the lip
To answer for a perjured oath in love ?
How should love breathe—how not die, choked for ut-
terance,

If *words* were all. He loved me with his eyes.

He breathed it. Upon every word he spoke
Hung an unuttered worship that his tongue
Would spend a life to make articulate.

Did he not take my hand into his own ?

And, as his heart sprang o'er that bridge of veins,
Did he not call to mine to pass him on it—
Each to the other's bosom ! I have sworn
To love him—wed him—die with him—and yet
He never *heard* me—but he *knows* it well,
And, in his heart holds me to answer for it.

I'll try once more to find this anger out.

If it be jealousy—why—then, indeed,
He'll call me black, and I'll forgive it him !

For then my errand's done, and I'll away
To play the cheat out that shall make him mine.)

(*Turns to Angelo.*) Fair signor, by your leave, I've
heard it said

That in the beauty of a human face
The God of Nature never writ a lie.

ANGELO.

'Tis likely true !

ISABELLA.

That howsoe'er the features
Seem fair at first, a blemish on the soul
Has its betraying speck that warns you of it.

ANGELO.

It should be so, indeed !

ISABELLA.

Nay—here's a face
Will show at once if it be true or no.
At the first glance 'tis fair !

ANGELO.

Most heavenly fair !

ISABELLA.

Yet, in the lip, methinks, there lurks a shadow—
Something—I know not what—but in it lies
The devil you spoke of !

ANGELO.

Ay—but 'tis not there !
Not in her lip ! Oh, no ! Look elsewhere for it.
'Tis passionately bright—but lip more pure
Ne'er passed unchallenged through the gate of heaven.
Believe me, 'tis not there !

ISABELLA.

How falls the light ?

I see a gleam not quite angelical
About the eye. Maybe the light falls wrong—

ANGELO, (*drawing her to another position.*)

Stand here! Dy'e see it now?

ISABELLA.

'Tis just so here!

ANGELO, (*sweeps the air with his brush.*)

There's some curst cobweb hanging from the wall
That blurs your sight. Now, look again!

ISABELLA.

I see it

Just as before.

ANGELO.

What! still? You've turn'd an eyelash
Under the lid. Try how it feels with winking.
Is't clear?

ISABELLA.

'Twas never clearer!

ANGELO.

Then, old man!

You'd best betake you to your prayers apace!
For you've a failing sight, death's sure forerunner—
And cannot pray long. Why, that eye's a star,
Sky-lit as Hesperus, and burns as clear.
If you e'er marked the zenith at high noon,
Or midnight, when the blue lifts up to God—

Her eye 's of that far darkness !

ISABELLA, (*smiling aside.*)

Stay—'tis gone !

A blur was on my sight, which, passing from it,
I see as you do. Yes—the eye is clear.
The forehead only, now I see so well,
Has in its arch a mark infallible
Of a false heart beneath it.

ANGELO.

Show it to me !

ISABELLA.

Between the eyebrows there !

ANGELO.

I see a tablet
Whereon the Saviour's finger might have writ
The new commandment. When I painted it
I plucked a just-blown lotus from the shade,
And shamed the white leaf till it seemed a spot—
The brow was so much fairer ! Go ! old man,
Thy sight fails fast. Go ! go !

ISABELLA.

The nostril's small—

Is't not ?

ANGELO.

No !

ISABELLA.

Then the cheek's awry so near it,
It makes it seem so !

ANGELO.

Out ! thou cavilling fool !
Thou'rt one of those whose own deformity
Makes all thou seest look monstrous. Go and pray
For a clear sight, and read thy missal with it.
Thou art a priest, and livest by the altar,
Yet dost thou recognize God's imprest seal,
Set on that glorious beauty !

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Oh, he loves me !

Loves me as genius loves—ransacking earth
And ruffling the forbidden flowers of heaven
To make celestial incense of his praise.
High-thoughted Angelo ! He loves me well !
With what a gush of all my soul I thank him—
But he's to win yet, and the time is precious.)
(*To Angelo.*) Signor, I take my leave.

ANGELO.

Good day, old man !
And, if thou com'st again, bring new eyes with thee,
Or thou wilt find scant welcome.

ISABELLA.

You shall like

These same eyes well enough when next I come !

[*Exit.*]

ANGELO.

A crabbed monk ! (*Turns the picture to the wall again.*)

I'll hide this fatal picture

From sight once more, for till he made me look on't
I did not know my weakness. Once more, Zippa,
I'll dwell on thy dear face, and with my pencil
Make thee more fair than life, and try to love thee !

(*A knock.*)

Come in !

[*Enter Zippa.*]

ZIPPA.

Good day, Signor Angelo !

ANGELO.

Why, Zippa ! is't thou ? is't thou, indeed !

ZIPPA.

Myself, dear Angelo !

ANGELO.

Art well ?

ZIPPA.

Ay !

ANGELO.

Hast been well ?

ZIPPA.

Ay !

ANGELO.

Then why, for three long days, hast thou not been near
me ?

ZIPPA.

Ask thyself, Signor Angelo !

ANGELO.

I have—a hundred times since I saw thee.

ZIPPA.

And there was no answer ?

ANGELO.

None !

ZIPPA.

Then shouldst thou have ask'd the picture on thy easel !

ANGELO.

Nay—I understand thee not.

ZIPPA.

Did I not find thee feasting thy eyes upon it ?

ANGELO.

True—thou didst ?

ZIPPA.

And art thou not enamoured of it—wilt tell me truly ?

ANGELO, (*smiling.*)

'Tis a fair face !

ZIPPA.

Oh, unkind Angelo !

ANGELO.

Look on't! and, seeing its beauty, if thou dost not forgive me, I will never touch pencil to it more.

ZIPPA.

I'll neither look on't, nor forgive thee. But if thou wilt love the picture of another better than mine, thou shalt paint a new one!

(*As she rushes up to dash it from the easel, Angelo catches her arm, and points to the picture. She looks at it, and, seeing her own portrait, turns and falls on his bosom.*)

My picture ! and I thought thee so false ! Dear, dear Angelo ! I could be grieved to have wronged thee, if joy would give me time. But thou'l forgive me ?

ANGELO.

Willingly ! Willingly !

ZIPPA.

And thou lovest me indeed, indeed ! Nay, answer not ! I will never doubt thee more ! Dear Angelo ! Yet—(*Suddenly turns from Angelo with a troubled air.*)

ANGELO.

What ails thee now ?

(*Zippa takes a rich veil from under her cloak, throws it over her head, and looks on the ground in embarrass'd silence.*)

Dost thou stand there for a picture of Silence ?

ZIPPA.

Alas! dear Angelo! When I said I forgave and lov'd thee, I forgot that I was to be married to-morrow!

ANGELO.

Married! to whom?

ZIPPA.

Tortesa, the usurer!

ANGELO.

Tortesa, saidst thou?

ZIPPA.

Think not ill of me, dear Angelo, till I have told thee all! This rich usurer, as thou knowest, would for *ambition* marry Isabella de Falcone.

ANGELO.

He would, I know.

ZIPPA.

But for *love*, he would marry your poor Zippa.

ANGELO.

Know you that?

ZIPPA.

He told me so the day you anger'd me with the praises of the court lady you were painting. What was her name, Angelo?

ANGELO, (*composedly.*)

I—I'll tell thee presently! Go on!

ZIPPA.

Well—jealous of this unknown lady, I vow'd, if it broke my heart, to wed Tortesa. He had told me Isabella scorn'd him. I flew to her palace. She heard me, pitied me, agreed to plot with me that I might wed the usurer, and then told me in confidence that there was a poor youth whom she loved and would fain marry.

ANGELO, (*in breathless anxiety.*)

Heard you his name ?

ZIPPA.

No ! But as I was to wed the richer and she the poorer, she took my poor veil, and gave me her rich one. Now canst thou read the riddle ?

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(A "poor youth!" What if it is I? She "loves and will wed him!" Oh! if it were I!)

ZIPPA.

Nay, dear Angelo ! be not so angry ! I do not love him ! Nay—thou knowst I do not !

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(It may be—nay—it must ! But I will know ! If not, I may as well die of that as of this jealous madness.)

(*Prepares to go out.*)

ZIPPA.

Angelo ! where go you ? Forgive me, dear Angelo ! I swear to thee I love him not !

ANGELO.

I'll know who that poor youth is, or suspense will kill me!

(*Goes out hastily, without a look at Zippa. She stands silent and amazed for a moment.*)

ZIPPA.

Why cares he to know who that poor youth is! "Suspense will kill him?" Stay! a light breaks on me! If Isabella were the Court lady whom he painted! If it were Angelo whom she loved! He is a poor youth!—The picture! The picture will tell all!

(*Hurriedly turns round several pictures turned to the wall, and last of all, Isabella's. Looks at it an instant, and exclaims*)

Isabella!

(*She drops on her knees, overcome with grief, and the scene closes.*)

SCENE II.

[*A Lady's dressing-room in the Falcone Palace. Isabella discovered with two phials.*]

ISABELLA.

Here is a draught will still the breath so nearly,
The keenest-eyed will think the sleeper dead,—
And *this* kills quite. Lie ready, trusty friends,

Close by my bridal veil ! I thought to baffle
My ruffian bridegroom by an easier cheat ;
But Zippa's dangerous, and if I fail
In *mocking* death, why *death indeed* be welcome !

(Enter *Zippa angrily.*)

ZIPPA.

Madam !

ISABELLA.

You come rudely !

ZIPPA.

If I offend you more, I still have cause—
Yet as the “ friend ” to whom you gave a husband,
(So kind you were !) I *might* come unannounced !

ISABELLA.

What is this anger ?

ZIPPA.

I'm not angry, madam !

Oh no ! I'm patient !

ISABELLA.

What's your errand, then ?

ZIPPA.

To give you back your costly bridal veil
And take my mean one.

ISABELLA.

'Twas *your* wish to change.

'Twas *you* that plotted we should wed together—
You in my place, and I in yours—wasn't not ?

ZIPPA.

Oh, heaven ! you're calm ! Had *you* no plotting, too ?
You're noble born, and so your face is marble—
I'm poor, and if my heart aches, 'twill show through.
You've robb'd me, madam !

ISABELLA.

I ?

ZIPPA.

Of gold—of jewels !—

Gold that would stretch the fancy but to dream of,
And gems like stars !

ISABELLA.

You're mad !

ZIPPA.

His love was worth them !

Oh, what had you to do with Angelo ?

ISABELLA.

Nay—came you not to wed Tortesa freely ?
What should *you* do with Angelo ?

ZIPPA.

You mock me !

You are a woman, though your brow's a rock,
And know what love is. In a ring of fire
The tortured scorpion stings himself, to die—
But love will turn upon itself, and grow
Of its own fang immortal !

ISABELLA.

Still, you left him
To wed another ?

ZIPPA.

'Tis for that he's mine !

What makes a right in any thing, but pain ?
The diver's agony beneath the sea
Makes the pearl his—pain gets the miser's gold—
The noble's coronet, won first in battle,
Is his by bleeding for't—and Angelo
Is ten times mine because I gave him up—
Crushing my heart to do so !

ISABELLA.

Now you plead
Against yourself. Say it would kill *me* quite,
If you should wed him ? Mine's the greater pain,
And so the fairer title !

ZIPPA, (*falling on her knees.*)

I implore you
Love him no more ! Upon my knees I do !
He's not like you ! Look on your snow-white arms !
They're form'd to press a noble to your breast—
Not Angelo ! He's poor—and fit for mine !
You would not lift a beggar to your lips !—
You would not lean from your proud palace-stairs
To pluck away a heart from a poor girl
Who has no more on earth !

ISABELLA.

I will not answer!

ZIPPA.

Think what it is! Love is to you like music—
Pertime! You think on't when the dance is o'er—
When there's no revel—when your hair's unbound,
And its bright jewels with the daylight pale—
You want a lover to press on the hours
That lag till night again! But I—

ISABELLA.

Stop there!

I love him better than you've soul to dream of!

ZIPPA, (*rising.*)

'Tis false! How can you? He's to you a lamp
That shines amid a thousand just as bright!
What's one amid your crowd of worshippers?
The glow-worm's bright—but oh! 'tis wanton murder
To raise him to the giddy air you breathe,
And leave his mate in darkness!

ISABELLA.

Say the worm

Soar from the earth on his own wing—what then?

ZIPPA.

Fair reasons cannot stay the heart from breaking.
You've stol'n my life, and you can give it back!
Will you—for heaven's sweet pity?

ISABELLA.

Leave my presence !

(*Aside.*) (I pity her—but on this fatal love
Hangs my life, too.) What right have such as you
To look with eyes of love on Angelo ?

ZIPPA.

What right ?

ISABELLA.

I say so. Where's the miracle
Has made you fit to climb into the sky—
A moth—and look with love upon a star !

ZIPPA, (*mournfully.*)

I'm lowly born, alas !

ISABELLA.

Your soul's low born !

Forget your anger and come near me, Zippa,
For e'er I'm done you'll wonder ! Have you ever,
When Angelo was silent, mark'd his eye—
How, of a sudden, as 'twere touch'd with fire,
There glows unnatural light beneath the lid ?

ZIPPA.

I have—I've thought it strange !

ISABELLA.

Have you walk'd with him
When he has turn'd his head, as if to list
To music in the air—but you heard none—

And presently a smile stole through his lips,
And some low words, inaudible to you,
Fell from him brokenly.

ZIPPA.

Ay—many times!

ISABELLA.

Tell me once more! Hast never heard him speak
With voice unlike his own—so melancholy,
And yet so sweet a voice, that, were it only
The inarticulate moaning of a bird,
The very tone of it had made you weep?

ZIPPA.

'Tis strangely true, indeed!

ISABELLA.

Oh heaven! You say so—
Yet never dreamt it was a spirit of light
Familiar with you!

ZIPPA.

How?

ISABELLA.

Why, there are seraphs
Who walk this common world, and want, as we do—
Here, in our streets—all seraph, save in wings—
The look, the speech, the forehead like a god—
And he the brightest!

ZIPPA, (*incredulously.*)

Nay—I've known him long!

ISABELLA.

Why, listen ! There are worlds, thou doubting fool !
 Farther to flee to than the stars in heaven,
 Which Angelo can walk as we do this—
 And does—while you look on him !

ZIPPA.

Angelo !

ISABELLA.

He's never at your side one constant minute
 Without a thousand messengers from thence !
 (O block ! to live with him, and never dream on't !)
 He plucks the sun's rays open like a thread,
 And knows what stains the rose and not the lily—
 He never sees a flower but he can tell
 Its errand on the earth—(they all have errands—
 You knew not that, oh dulness !) He sees shapes
 Flush'd with immortal beauty in the clouds—
 (You've seen him mock a thousand on his canvass,
 And never wonder'd !) Yet you talk of love !
 What love you ?

ZIPPA.

Angelo—and not a dream !

Take you the dream and give me Angelo !
 You may talk of him till my brain is giddy—
 But oh, you cannot praise him out of reach
 Of my true heart.—He's here, as low as I !—
 Shall he not wed a woman, flesh and blood ?

ISABELLA.

See here ! There was a small, earth-creeping mole,
Born by the low nest of an unfledged lark.
They lived an April youth amid the grass—
The soft mole happy, and the lark no less,
And thought the bent sky leaned upon the flowers.
By early May the fledgling got his wings ;
And, eager for the light, one breezy dawn,
Sprang from his nest, and buoyantly away,
Fled forth to meet the morning. Newly born
Seem'd the young lark, as in another world
Of light, and song, and creatures like himself,
He soar'd and droppe'd, and sang unto the sun,
And pitied every thing that had not wings—
But most the mole, that wanted even eyes
To see the light he floated in !

ZIPPA.

Yet still

She watch'd his nest, and fed him when he came—
Would it were Angelo and I indeed !

ISABELLA.

Nay, mark ! The bird grew lonely in the sky.
There was no echo at the height he flew !
And when the mist lay heavy on his wings
His song broke, and his flights were brief and low—
And the dull mole, that should have sorrowed with him,
Joy'd that he sang at last where she could hear !

ZIPPA.

Why, happy mole again !

ISABELLA.

Not long !—for soon
 He found a mate that loved him *for his wings* ?
 One who with feebler flight, but eyes still on him,
 Caught up his dropp'd song in the middle air,
 And, with the echo, cheered him to the sun !

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(I see ! I see ! His *soul* was never mine !
 I was the blind mole of her hateful story !
 No, no ! he never loved me ! True, we ate,
 And laugh'd, and danced together—but no love—
 He never told his thought when he was sad !
 His folly and his idleness were mine—
 No more ! The rest was lock'd up in his soul !
 I feel my heart grow black !) Fair madam, thank you !
 You've told me news ! (She shall not have him neither,
 If there's a plot in hate to keep him from her !
 I must have room to think, and air to breathe—
 I choke here !) Madam, the blind mole takes leave !

ISABELLA.

Farewell !

[Exit Zippa.]

(Takes the phial from the table.)

And now, come forth, sweet comforter !
 I'll to my chamber with this drowsy poison,

And from my sleep I wake up Angelo's,
Or wake no more!

[*Exit.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

[*A sumptuous Drawing-room in the Falcone Palace. Guests assembled for the bridal. Lords and ladies promenading, and a band of musicians in a gallery at the side of the stage.*]

1st. LORD.

Are we before the hour ? or does the bridegroom
Affect this tardiness ?

2d. LORD.

We're bid at twelve.

1st. LORD.

'Tis now past one. At least we should have music
To wile the time. (*To the musicians.*) Strike up, good
fellows !

2d. LORD.

Why,

A man who's only drest on holidays
Makes a long toilet. Now, I'll warrant he
Has vex'd his tailor since the break of day
Hoping to look a gentleman. D'ye know him ?

1st. LORD.

I've never had occasion !

2d. LORD.

Poor Falcone !

He'd give the best blood in his veins, I think,
To say as much !

1st. LORD.

How's this ! I see no stir
Among the instruments. Will they not play ?

2d. LORD.

Not they ! I ask'd before you, and they're bid
To strike up when they hear Tortesa's horses
Prance thro' the gateway—not a note till then !

(*Music plays.*)

1st. LORD.

He comes !

(*Enter Tortesa, dressed over-richly.*)

TORTESA.

Good day, my lords !

1st. LORD.

Good day !

2d. LORD.

The sky

Smiles on you, Signor ! 'Tis a happy omen
They say, to wed in sunshine.

TORTESA.

Why, I think
The sun is not displeased that I should wed.

1st. LORD.

We're happy, Sir, to have you one of us.

TORTESA.

What have I been *till now* ! I was a man
Before I saw your faces ! Where's the change ?
Have I a tail since ? Am I grown a monkey ?

(*Lords whisper together, and walk from him.*)

Oh for a mint to coin the world again
And melt the mark of gentleman from clowns !
It puts me out of patience ! Here's a fellow
That, by much rubbing against better men,
Has, like a penny in a Jew's close pocket,
Stolen the color of a worthier coin,
And thinks he rings like sterling courtesy !
Yet look ! he cannot phrase you a good Morrow,
Or say he's sad, or glad, at any thing,
But close beneath it, rank as verdigrease,
Lies an insulting rudeness ! He was "*happy*"
That I should now be one of them. *Now ! Now !*
As if, *till now*, I'd been a dunghill grub,
And was but just turn'd butterfly !

(*A Lady advances.*)

LADY.

Fair Sir,
I must take leave to say, were you my brother,

You've made the choice that would have pleas'd me best!
Your bride's as good as fair.

TORTESA.

I thank you, Madam !
To be *your* friend, she should be—good and fair !

(*The Lady turns, and walks up the stage.*)

How like a drop of oil upon the sea
Falls the apt word of woman ! So ! her “brother !”
Why, there could be no contumely there !
I might, for all I *look*, have been her brother,
Else her first thought had never coupled us.
I'll pluck some self-contentment out of that !

(Enter suddenly the Count's Secretary.)
How now !

SECRETARY.

I'm sent, Sir, with unwelcome tidings.

TORTESA.

Deliver them the quicker !

SECRETARY.

I shall be
Too sudden at the slowest.

TORTESA.

Pshaw ! what is't ?
I'm not a girl ! Out with your news at once !
Are my ships lost ?

SECRETARY, (*hesitatingly.*)

The lady Isabella—

TORTESA.

What? run away!

SECRETARY.

Alas, good Sir! she's dead!

TORTESA.

Bah! just as dead as I! Why, thou dull blockhead!
Cannot a lady faint, but there must be
A trumpeter like thee to make a tale on't?

SECRETARY.

Pardon me, Signor, but—

TORTESA.

Who sent you hither?

SECRETARY.

My lord the Count.

TORTESA, (*turning quickly aside.*)

He put it in the bond,
That if by any humor of my own,
Or accident that *sprang not from himself,*
Or from his daughter's will, the match were marr'd,
His tenure stood intact. If she *were* dead—
I don't believe she is—but if she were,
By one of those strange chances that do happen—
If she were dead, I say, the silly fish
That swims with safety among hungry sharks
To run upon the pin-hook of a boy,
Might teach me wisdom!

(*The Secretary comes forward, narrating eagerly to the company.*)

Now, what says this jackdaw ?

SECRETARY.

She had refused to let her bridesmaids in—

LADY.

And died alone ?

SECRETARY.

A trusty serving maid
Was with her, and none else. She dropp'd away,
The girl said, in a kind of weary sleep.

1st. LORD.

Was no one told of it ?

SECRETARY.

The girl watch'd by her,
And thought she slept still ; till, the music sounding,
She shook her by the sleeve, but got no answer ;
And so the truth broke on her !

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(Oh indeed !

The plot is something shallow !)

2d. LORD.

Might we go

And see her as she lies ?

SECRETARY.

The holy father
Who should have married her, has check'd all comers,
And staying for no shroud but bridal dress,
He bears her presently to lie in state
In the Falcone chapel.

TORTESA. (*aside.*)

(Worse and worse—
They take me for a fool!)

1st. LORD.

But why such haste?

SECRETARY.

I know not.

ALL.

Let us to the chapel!

TORTESA.

(Drawing his sword, and stepping between them and
the door.)

Hold!

Let no one try to pass!

1st. LORD.

What mean you, Sir!

TORTESA.

To keep you here till you have got your story
Pat to the tongue—the truth on't, and no more!

LADY.

Have you a doubt the bride is dead, good Signor?

TORTESA.

A palace, see you, has a tricky air !
When I am told a tradesman's daughter's dead,
I know the coffin holds an honest corse,
Sped, in sad earnest, to eternity.
But were I stranger in the streets to-day,
And heard that an ambitious usurer,
With lands and money having bought a lady
High-born and fair, she died before the bridal,
I would lay odds with him that told me of it
She'd rise again—before the resurrection.
So stand back all ! If I'm to fill to-day
The pricking ears of Florence with a lie,
The bridal guests shall tell the tale so truly,
And mournfully, from eyesight of the corse,
That ev'n the shrewdest listener shall believe,
And I myself have no misgiving of it.
Look ! where they come !

(*Door opens to funereal music, and the body of Isabella is borne in, preceded by a monk, and followed by Falcone and mourners. Tortesa confronts the Monk.*)

What's this you bear away ?

MONK.

Follow the funeral, but stay it not.

TORTESA.

If thereon lie the lady Isabella,
I ask to see her face before she pass !

MONK.

Stand from the way, my son, it cannot be !

TORTESA.

What right have you to take me for a stone ?
 See what you do ! I stand a bridegroom here.
 A moment since the joyous music playing
 Which promised me a fair and blushing bride.
 The flowers are fragrant, and the guests made welcome ;
 And while my heart beats at the opening door,
 And eagerly I look to see her come,—
 There enters in her stead a covered corse !
 And when I ask to look upon her face—
 One look, before my bride is gone for ever,—
 You find it in your hearts to say me nay !—
 Shame ! Shame !

FALCONE, (*fiercely.*)

Lead on !

TORTESA.

My lord, by covenant—
 By contract writ and seal'd—by value rendered—
 By her own promise—nay, by all, save taking,
 This body's mine ! I'll have it set down here
 And wait my pleasure ! See it done, my lord,
 Or I will, for you !

MONK, (*to the bearers.*)

Set the body down !

TORTESA, (*takes the veil from the face.*)
 Come hither all ! Nay, father, look not black !

If o'er the azure temper of this blade
There come no mist, when laid upon her lips,
I'll do a penance for irreverence,
And fill your sack with penitential gold !
Look well !

(*Puts his sword blade to Isabella's lips, and after watching it with intense interest a moment, drops on his knees beside the bier.*)

She's dead indeed ! Lead on !

(*The procession starts again to funereal music, and Tortesa follows last.*)

SCENE II.

[*A Street in Florence. The funereal music dying away in the distance. Enter Zippa, straining her eyes to look after it.*]

ZIPPA.

'Tis Angelo that follows close behind,
Laying his forehead almost on her bier !
His heart goes with her to the grave ! Oh Heaven !
Will not Tortesa pluck out of his hand
The tassel of that pall ?

(*She hears a footstep.*)

Stay, stay, he's here !

(*Enter Tortesa, musing. Zippa stands aside.*)

TORTESA.

I've learned to-day a lord may be a Jew,
 I've learned to-day that grief may kill a lady ;
 Which touches me the most I cannot say,
 For I could fight Falcone for my loss
 Or weep, with all my soul, for Isabella.

(*Zippa touches him on the shoulder.*)

ZIPPA.

How is't the Signor follows not his bride ?

TORTESA.

I did—but with their melancholy step
 I fell to musing, and so dropp'd behind—
 But here's a sight I have not seen to-day !

(*Takes her hand smilingly.*)

ZIPPA.

What's that ?

TORTESA.

A friendly face, my honest Zippa !
 Art well ? What errand brings thee forth ?

ZIPPA.

None, Signor !

But passing by the funeral, I stopped,
 Wondering to see the bridegroom lag behind,
 And give his sacred station next the corse
 To an obtrusive stranger.

TORTESA.

Which is he ?

ZIPPA, (*points after Angelo.*)

Look there!

TORTESA.

His face is buried in his cloak.

Who is't?

ZIPPA.

Not know him? Had I half the cause
That *you* have, to see through that mumming cloak,
The shadow of it would speak out his name!

TORTESA.

What mean you?

ZIPPA.

Angelo! What right has he
To weep in public at her funeral?

TORTESA.

The painter?

ZIPPA.

Ay—the peasant Angelo!
Was't not enough to dare to love her living,
But he must fling the insult of his tears
Betwixt her corse and you? Are you not mov'd?
Will you not go and pluck him from your place?

TORTESA.

No, Zippa! for my spirits are more apt
To grief than anger. I've in this half hour
Remember'd much I should have thought on sooner,—

For, had I known her heart was capable
 Of breaking for the love of one so low,
 I would have done as much to make her his
 As I have done, in hate, to make her mine.
 She lov'd him, Zippa! (*Walks back in thought.*)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

Oh to find a way
 To pluck that fatal beauty from his eyes !
 'Tis twilight, and the lamp is lit above her,
 And Angelo will watch the night out there,
 Gazing with passionate worship on her face.
 But no ! he shall not !

TORTESA, (*advancing.*)

Come ! what busy thought
 Vexes your brain now ?

ZIPPA.

Were your pride as quick
 As other men's to see an insult, Signor !
 I had been spared the telling of my thought.

TORTESA.

You put it sharply !

ZIPPA.

Listen ! you are willing
 That there should follow, in your place of mourner,
 A youth, who, by the passion of his grief
 Shews to the world he's more bereaved than you !

TORTESA.

Humph! well!

ZIPPA.

Still follows he without rebuke ;
And in the chapel where she lies to-night,
Her features bared to the funereal lamp,
He'll, like a mourning bridegroom, keep his vigil,
As if all Florence knew she was his own.

TORTESA.

Nay, nay ! he may keep vigil if he will !
The door is never lock'd upon the dead
Till bell and mass consign them to the tomb ;
And custom gives the privilege to all
To enter in and pray—and so may he.

ZIPPA.

Then learn a secret which I fain had spared
My lips the telling. Question me not how,
But I have chanced to learn, that Angelo,
To-night, will *steal the body from its bier* !

TORTESA.

To-night ! What ! Angelo ! Nay, nay, good Zippa !
If he's enamoured of the corse, 'tis there—
And he may watch it till its shape decay,
And holy church will call it piety.
But he who steals from consecrated ground,
Dies, by the law of Florence. There's no end
To answer in't.

ZIPPA.

You know not, Angelo !
 You think not with what wild, delirious passion
 A painter thirsts to tear the veil from beauty.
 He painted Isabella as a maid,
 Coy as a lily turning from the sun.
 Now she is dead, and, like a star that flew
 Flashing and hiding thro' some fleecy rack,
 But suddenly sits still in cloudless heavens,
 She slumbers fearless in his steadfast gaze,
 Peerless and unforbidding. O, to him
 She is no more your bride ! A statue fairer
 Than ever rose enchanted from the stone,
 Lies in that dim-lit chapel, clad like life.
 Are you too slow to take my meaning yet ?
 He cannot loose the silken boddice *there* !
 He cannot, *there*, upon the marble breast
 Shower the dark locks from the golden comb !

TORTESA.

Hold !

ZIPPA.

Are you mov'd ? Has he no *end* to compass
 In stealing her away from holy ground ?
 Will you not lock your bride up from his touch ?

TORTESA.

No more ! no more ! I thought not of all this !
 Perchance it is not true. But twilight falls,

And I will home to doff this bridal gear,
And, after, set a guard upon the corse.
We'll walk together. Come!

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(He shall not see her !)

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

[*A Street in front of the Falcone Palace. Night. Enter Isabella in her white bridal dress. She falters to her father's door, and drops exhausted.*]

ISABELLA.

My brain swims round ! I'll rest a little here !
The night's cold, chilly cold. Would I could reach
The house of Angelo ! Alas ! I thought
He would have kept *one* night of vigil near me,
Thinking me dead. Bear up, good heart ! Alas !
I faint ! Where am I ? (*Looks around.*)
 'Tis my father's door.
My undirected feet have brought me home—
And I must in, or die ! (*Knocks with a painful effort.*)
 So ends my dream !

FALCONE, (*from above.*)

Who's that would enter to a mourning house ?

ISABELLA.

Your daughter !

FALCONE.

Ha ! what voice is that I hear ?

ISABELLA.

Poor Isabella's.

FALCONE.

Art thou come to tell me,
That with unnatural heart I killed my daughter ?
Just Heaven ! thy retribution follows fast !
But oh, if holy and unnumbered masses
Can give thee rest, perturb'd and restless spirit !
Haunt thou a weeping penitent no more !
Depart ! I'll in, and pass the night in prayer !
So shalt thou rest ! Depart !
(He closes the window, and Isabella drops with her forehead to the marble stair.)

(Enter Tomaso, with a bottle in his hand.)

TOMASO.

It's like the day after the deluge. Few stirring and nobody dry. I've been since twilight looking for somebody that would drink. Not a beggar athirst in all Florence ! I thought that, with a bottle in my hand, I should be scented like a wild boar. I expected drunkards would have come up out of the ground--like worms in a shower. When was *I* ever so difficult to find by a moist friend ?

Two hundred ducats in good wine and no companion !
I'll look me up a dry dog. I'll teach him to tipple, and
give up the fellowship of mankind

ISABELLA, (*faintly.*)

Signor !

TOMASO.

Hey ! What !

ISABELLA.

Help Signor !

TOMASO¹

A woman ! Ehem ! (*approaching her.*) Would you take something to drink by any chance ? (*Offers her the bottle.*) No ? Perhaps you don't like to drink out of the bottle.

ISABELLA.

I perish of cold !

TOMASO.

Stay ! Here's a cloak ! My master's out for the night, and you shall home with me. Come ! Perhaps when you get warmer, you'd like to drink a little. The wine's good ! (*Assists her in rising,*) By St. Genevieve, a soft hand ! Come ! I'll bring you where there's fire and a clean flagon.

ISABELLA.

To any shelter, Signor !

TOMASO.

Shelter! nay, a good house, and two hundred ducats in ripe wine. Steady now! (This shall pass for a good action! If my master smell a rat, I'll face him out the woman's honest!) This way, now! Softly! That's well stepp'd! Come!

(*Goes out, assisting her to walk.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

[*Angelo's Studio. A full-length picture, in a large frame, stands on the floor against an easel, placed nearly in the centre of the room. Two curtains, so arranged as to cover the picture when drawn together. Angelo stands in an imploring attitude near the picture, his pencil and palette in his hands, appealing to Isabella, who is partly turned from him in an attitude of refusal. The back wall of the room such as to form a natural ground for a picture.]*

ANGELO.

Hear me, sweet !

ISABELLA.

No, we'll keep a holiday,
And waste the hours in love and idleness.
You shall not paint to-day, dear Angelo !

ANGELO.

But listen !

ISABELLA.

Nay, I'm jealous of my picture ;
 For all you give to that is stol'n from me.
 I like not half a look that turns away
 Without an answer from the eyes it met !
 I care not you should see my lips' bright color
 Yet wait not for the breath that floats between !

ANGELO.

Wilt listen ?

ISABELLA.

Listen ? Yes ! a thousand years !
 But there's a pencil in those restless fingers,
 Which you've a trick of touching to your lips—
 And while you talk, my hand would do as well !
 And if it's the same tale you told before
 Of *certain vigils* you forgot to keep,
 Look deep into my eyes till it is done—
 For, like the children's Lady-in-the-well,
 I only hark because you're looking in !
 Will you talk thus to me ?

ANGELO.

Come night I will !

But close upon thy voice, sweet Isabella !
 A boding whisper sinks into mine ear
 Which tells of sudden parting ! If 'tis false,—
 We shall have still a lifetime for our love,
 But if 'tis true, oh think that, in my picture,

Will lie the footprint of an angel gone !
Let me but make it clearer !

ISABELLA.

Now, by heaven !
I think thou lov'st the picture, and not me !
So different am I, that, did I think
To lose thee presently, by death or parting,
For thy least word, or look, or slightest motion—
Nay, for so little breath as makes a sigh
I would not take, to have it pass untreasured,
The empire of a star !

(*While she was uttering this reproach, Angelo has looked at her with delight, and touched his portrait with a few rapid strokes.*)

ANGELO.

My picture's done !
(*Throws his pencil to the ground.*)
Break, oh enchanted pencil ! thou wilt never
On earth, again, do miracle so fair !
Oh Isabella ! as the dusky ore
Waits for the lightning's flash to turn to gold—
As the dull vapor waits for Hesperus,
Then falls in dew-drops, and reflects a star—
So waited I that fire upon thy lips,
To make my master-piece complete in beauty !

ISABELLA.

This is ambition when I look'd for love,

The fancy flattering where the heart should murmur.
I think you have no heart!

ANGELO.

Your feet are on it !
The heart is ever lowly with the fortunes,
Tho' the proud mind sits level with a king !
I gave you long ago both heart and soul,
But only one has dared to speak to you !
Yet, if astonishment will cure the dumb,
Give it a kiss—

ISABELLA, (*smiling.*)

Lo ! Where it speaks at last !
(*A loud knock is heard.*)

Hark, Angelo !

(*He flies to the window, and looks out.*)

ANGELO.

Tortesa with a guard !

Alas ! that warning voice ! They've traced thee hither !
Lost ! Lost !

ISABELLA, (*Hastily drawing the curtain, and disappearing behind it.*)

No ! no ! defend thy picture only,
And all is well yet !

ANGELO.

Thee and it with life !

(*Draws his sword, and stands before the curtain in an attitude of defiance. Enter Tortesa, with officers and guard.*)
What is your errand ?

TORTESA.

I'm afraid, a sad one!
For, by your drawn sword and defying air,
Your conscious thought foretells it.

ANGELO.

Why,—a blow—

(You took one, Signor, when you last were here—
If you've forgot it, well!)—but, commonly,
The giver of a blow needs have his sword
Promptly in hand. You'll pardon me !

TORTESA.

I do!

For, if my fears are just, good Signor painter !
You've not a life to spare upon a quarrel !
In brief, the corse of a most noble lady
Was stol'n last night from holy sanctuary.
I have a warrant here to search your house ;
And, should the body not be found therein,
I'm bid to see the picture of the lady—
Wheron, (pray mark me!) if I find a trace
Of charms fresh copied, more than may beseem
The modest beauty of a living maid,
I may arrest you on such evidence
For instant trial !

ANGELO.

Search my house and welcome !
But, for my picture, tho' a moment's glance

Upon its pure and hallowed loveliness
 Would give the lie to your foul thought of me,
 It is the unseen virgin of my brain !
 And as th' inviolate person of a maid
 Is sacred ev'n in presence of the law,
 My picture is my own—to bare or cover !
 Look on it at your peril !

TORTESA, (*to the guard.*)

Take his sword.

(*The guards attack and disarm him.*)

ANGELO.

Coward and villain !

(*Tortesa parts the curtains with his sword, and Angelo starts amazed to see Isabella, with her hands crossed on her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ground, standing motionless in the frame which had contained his picture. The tableau deceives Tortesa, who steps back to contemplate what he supposes to be the portrait of his bride.*)

TORTESA.

Admirable work !

'Tis Isabella's self ! Why, this is wondrous !
 The brow, the lip, the countenance—how true !
 I would have sworn that gloss upon the hair,
 That shadow from the lash, were nature's own—
 Impossible to copy ! (*Looks at it a moment in silence.*)

Yet methinks

The color on the cheek is something faint !

ANGELO, (*hurriedly.*)

Step this way farther!

TORTESA, (*changing his position.*)

Ay—'tis better here !

The hand is not as white as Isabella's—
But painted to the life! If there's a feature
That I would touch again, the lip, to me,
Seems wanting in a certain scornfulness
Native to *her*! It scarcely marr'd her beauty.
Perhaps 'tis well slurr'd over in a picture!
Yet stay! I see it, now I look again!
How excellently well!

(*Guards return from searching the house.*)

What! found you nothing?

SOLDIER, (*holding up Isabella's veil.*)

This bridal veil—no more.

ANGELO, (*despairingly.*)

Oh! luckless star!

TORTESA.

Signor! you'll trust me when I say I'm sorry
With all my soul! This veil, I know it well—
Was o'er the face of that unhappy lady
When laid in sanctuary. You are silent!
Perhaps you scorn to satisfy me here!
I trust you can—in your extremity!
But I must bring you to the Duke! Lead on!

ANGELO.

An instant!

TORTESA, (*courteously.*)

At your pleasure!

ANGELO, (*to Isabella, as he passes close to her.*)

I conjure you,

By all our love, stir not!

ISABELLA, (*still motionless.*)

Farewell!

(*Tortesa motions for Angelo to precede him with the guard, looks once more at the picture, and with a gesture expressive of admiration, follows. As the door closes, Isabella steps from the frame.*)

.ISABELLA.

I'll follow

Close on thy steps, beloved Angelo!

And find a way to bring thee home again!

My heart is light, and hope speaks cheerily!

And lo! bright augury!—a friar's hood

For my disguise! Was ever omen fairer!

Thanks! my propitious star!

(*Envelopes herself in the hood, and goes out hastily.*)

SCENE II.

[A Street. Enter Tomaso, with his hat crushed and pulled sulkily over his eyes, his clothes dirty on one side, and other marks of having slept in the street. Enter Zippa from the other side, meeting him.]

ZIPPY.

Tomaso! Is't thou? Where's Angelo?

TOMASO.

It is I, and I don't know!

ZIPPY.

Did he come home last night?

TOMASO.

"Did he come home?" Look there! (Pulls off his hat, and shews his dirty side.)

ZIPPY.

Then thou hast slept in the street!

TOMASO.

Ay!

ZIPPY.

And what has that to do with the coming home of Angelo?

TOMASO.

What had thy father to do with thy having such a nose as his?

(*Zippa holds up a ducat to him.*)

What ! gave thy mother a ducat ?—cheap as dirt !

ZIPPA.

Blockhead, no ! I'll give thee the ducat if thou wilt tell me, straight on, what thou know'st of Angelo !

TOMASO.

I will—and thou shalt see how charity is rewarded.

ZIPPA.

Begin!—begin!

TOMASO.

Last night, having pray'd later than usual at vespers——

ZIPPA.

Ehem !

TOMASO.

I was coming home in a pious frame of mind—

ZIPPA.

—And a bottle in thy pocket.

TOMASO.

No!—in my hand. What should I stumble over——

ZIPPA.

—But a stone.

TOMASO.

A woman !

ZIPPA.

Fie ! what's this you're going to tell me ?

TOMASO.

She was dying with cold. Full of Christian charity—

ZIPPA.

—And new wine.

TOMASO.

Old wine, Zippa ! The wine was old !

ZIPPA.

Well!

TOMASO.

I took her home.

ZIPPA.

Shame !—at thy years ?

TOMASO.

And Angelo being out for the night—

ZIPPA.

There ! there ! you may skip the particulars.

TOMASO.

I say my own bed being in the garret—

ZIPPA.

Well, well !

TOMASO.

I put her into Angelo's.

ZIPPA.

Oh, unspeakable impudence! Didst thou do that?

TOMASO.

I had just left her to make a wine posset, (for she was well nigh dead), when in popped my master,—finds her there—asks no questions,—kicks me into the street, and locks the door! *There's* the reward of virtue!

ZIPPA.

Did he not turn out the woman, too?

TOMASO.

Not as I remember.

ZIPPA.

Oh worse and worse! And thou hast not seen him since?

TOMASO.

I found me a soft stone, 'said my prayers, and went to sleep.

ZIPPA.

And hast thou not seen him to-day?

TOMASO.

Partly, I have!

ZIPPA.

Where? Tell me quickly!

TOMASO.

Give me the ducat.

ZIPPA, (*gives it him.*)

Quick! say on!

TOMASO.

I have a loose recollection, that, lying on that stone, Angelo called me by name. Looking up, I saw two Angelos, and two Tortesas, and soldiers with two spears each. (*He figures in the air with his finger as if trying to remember.*)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Ha! he is apprehended for the murder of Isabella ! Say that my evidence might save his life ! Not unless he love me!) Which way went he, Tomaso ?

(*Tomaso points.*)

This way? (Then has he gone to be tried before the Duke.) Come with me, Tomaso! Come.

TOMASO.

Where?

ZIPPA.

To the Duke's palace! Come! (*Takes his arm.*)

TOMASO.

To the Duke's palace? There'll be kicking of heels in the ante-chamber!—Dry work! I'll spend thy ducat as we go along. Shall it be old wine, or new?

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

[*Hall of Judgment in the Ducal Palace. The Duke upon a raised throne on the left. Falcone near his chair, and Angelo on the opposite side of the stage with a guard. Isabella behind the guard, disguised as a monk. Tortesa stands near the centre of the stage, and Zippa and Tomaso in the left corner, listening eagerly. Counsellors at a table, and crowd of spectators at the sides and rear.*]]

DUKE.

Are there more witnesses ?

COUNSELLOR.

No more, my liege !

DUKE.

None for the prisoner ?

COUNSELLOR.

He makes no defence

Beyond a firm denial.

FALCONE.

Is there wanting

Another proof, my liege, that he is guilty ?

DUKE.

I fear he stands in deadly peril, Count.

(To the Counsellor.) Sum up the evidence.

(He reads.)

COUNSELLOR.

'Tis proved, my liege,
That for no honest or sufficient end,
The pris'ner practised on your noble Grace
And Count Falcone a contriv'd deceit,
Whereby he gain'd admittance to the lady.

(*Tomaso exhibits signs of alarm.*)

DUKE.

Most true!

COUNSELLOR.

That, till the eve before her death,
He had continual access to the palace ;
And, having grown enamoured of the bride,
Essay'd by plots that never were matured,
And quarrels often forced on her betrothed,
To stay the bridal. That, against the will
Of her most noble father and the Duke,
The bride was resolute to keep her troth ;
And so, preparing for the ceremony,
Upon her bridal morning was found dead.
'Tis proved again—that, while she lay in state,
The guard, at several periods of the night,
Did force the pris'ner from the chapel door ;
And when the corse was stol'n from sanctuary
All search was vain, till, in the pris'ner's hands
Was found the veil that shrouded her. To these
And lighter proofs of sacrilege and murder

The prisoner has opposed his firm denial—
No more!

DUKE.

Does no one speak in his behalf?

TORTESA.

My liege! so far as turns the evidence
Upon the prisoner's quarrels with myself,
I'm free to say that they had such occasion
As any day may rise 'twixt men of honor.
As one of those aggrev'd by his offences,
You'll wonder I'm a suitor for his pardon—
But so I am! Besides that there is room
To hope him innocent, your Grace's realm
Holds not so wondrous and so rare a painter!
If he has kill'd the lady Isabella,
'Tis some amends that in his glorious picture
She's made immortal! If he stole her corse,
He can return, for that disfigured dust,
An Isabella fresh in changeless beauty!
Were it not well to pardon him, my Lord?

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

Oh brave Tortesa!

DUKE.

You have pleaded kindly
And eloquently, Signor! but the law
Can recognize no gift as plea for pardon.
For his rare picture he will have his fame;

But if the Isabella he has painted
Find not a voice to tell his innocence,
He dies at sunset!

ISABELLA, (*despairingly.*)

He is dead to me!

Yet he shall live !

(*She drops the cowl from her shoulders, and with her arms folded, walks slowly to the feet of the Duke.*)

FALCONE, (*rushing forward.*)

My daughter !

ANGELO, (*with a gesture of agony.*)

Lost !

TORTESA.

Alive !

ZIPPA, (*energetically.*)

Tortesa 'll have her !

(*Isabella retires to the back of the stage with her father, and kneels to him, imploring in dumb show ; the Duke and others watching.*)

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

So ! all's right again ?

Now for my lands, or Isabella ?—Stay !

'Tis a brave girl, by Heaven !

(*Reflects a moment.*)

A sleeping draught,

And so to Angelo ! Her love for me

A counterfeit to take suspicion off !
It was well done ! I feel my heart warm to her !

(*Reflects again.*)

Where could he hide her from our search to-day ?

(*Looks round at Isabella.*)

No ? Yet the dress is like ! It *was* the picture !
Herself—and *not* a picture ! Now, by Heaven,
A girl like that should be the wife of Cæsar !

(*Presses his hand upon his heart.*)

I've a new feeling here !

(*Falcone comes forward, followed by Isabella with gestures of supplication.*)

FALCONE.

I will not hear you !

My liege, I pray you keep the prisoner
In durance till my daughter's fairly wed.
He has contriv'd against our peace and honor,
And howsoe'er this marvel be made clear,
She stands betroth'd, if he is in the mind,
To the brave Signor, yonder !

DUKE.

This were well—

What says Tortesa ?

TORTESA.

If my liege permit,
I will address my answer to this lady.

(*Turns to Isabella.*)

For reasons which I need not give you now,
Fair Isabella ! I became your suitor.
My motives were unworthy you and me—
Yet I was true—I never said I lov'd you !
Your father sold you me for lands and money—
(Pardon me, Duke ! And you, fair Isabella !
You will—ere I am done !) I push'd my suit!
The bridal day came on, and clos'd in mourning ;
For the fair bride it dawn'd upon was dead.
I had my shame and losses to remember—
But in my heart sat sorrow uppermost,
And pity—for I thought your heart was broken.
(*Isabella begins to discover interest in his story, and Angelo watches her with jealous eagerness.*)

I see you here again ! You are my bride !
Your father holds me to my bargain for you !
The lights are burning on the nuptial altar—
The bridal chamber and the feast, all ready !
What stays the marriage now ?—*my new-born love !*
That nuptial feast were fruit from Paradise—
I cannot touch it till *you* bid me welcome !
That nuptial chamber were the lap of Heaven—
I cannot enter till *you* call me in !

(*Takes a ring from his bosom.*)

Here is the golden ring you should have worn.
Tell me to give it to my rival there—
I'll break my heart to do so ! (*Holds it toward Angelo.*)

ISABELLA, (*looking at her father.*)

Would I might!

TORTESA.

You shall, if't please you !

FALCONE.

I command thee, never !

My liege, permit me to take home my daughter !
And, Signor, you—if you would keep your troth—
To-morrow come, and end this halting bridal !
Home ! Isabella ! (*Takes his daughter's hand.*)

TORTESA, (*taking it from him.*)

Stay ! she is not your's !

My gracious liege, there is a law in Florence,
That if a father, for no guilt or shame,
Disown, and shut his door upon his daughter,
She is the child of him who succors her ;
Who, by the shelter of a single night,
Becomes endowed with the authority
Lost by the other. Is't not so ?

DUKE.

So runs

The law of Florence, and I see your drift—
For, look my lord ! (*to Falcone,*) if that dread apparition
You saw last night, was this your living daughter,
You stand within the peril of that law.

FALCONE.

My liege !

ISABELLA, (*looking admiringly at Tortesa.*)

Oh noble Signor!

TORTESA, (*to Isabella.*)

Was't well done ?

Shall I give Angelo the ring ?

(*As she is about to take it from him, Tomaso steps in behind, and pulls Isabella by the sleeve.*)

TOMASO.

Stay there !

What wilt thou do for dowry ? I'm thy father ?

But—save some flasks of wine—

ISABELLA, (*sorrowfully.*)

Would I were richer

For thy sake, Angelo !

(*Tortesa looks at her an instant, and then steps to the table and writes.*)

ANGELO, (*coming forward with an effort.*)

Look, Isabella !

I stand between thee and a life of sunshine.

Thou wert both rich and honor'd, *but for me !*

That thou *couldst* wed me, beggar as I am,

Is bliss to think on—but see how I rob thee !

I have a loving heart—but am a beggar !

There is a loving heart—

(*Points to Tortesa.*)

With wealth and honor !

(*Tortesa steps between them, and hands a paper to Angelo.*)

TORTESA, (*to Isabella.*)

Say thou wilt wed the poorer?

ISABELLA, (*offers her hand to Angelo.*)

So I will!

TORTESA.

Then am I blest, for he's as rich as I—

Yet, in his genius, has one jewel more!

ISABELLA.

What sayst thou?

(*Angelo reads earnestly.*)

TORTESA.

In a mortal quarrel, lady!

'Tis thought ill-luck to have the better sword;
For the good angels, who look sorrowing on,
In heavenly pity take the weaker side!

ISABELLA.

What is it, Angelo?

ANGELO.

A deed to me

Of the Falcone palaces and lands,
And all the moneys forfeit by your father!—
By Heaven, I'll not be mock'd!

TORTESA.

The deed is yours—

What mockery in that ?

ISABELLA, (*tenderly to Tortesa.*)

It is not kind

To make refusal of your love a pain !

TORTESA.

I would 'twould *kill* you to refuse me, lady !
So should the blood plead for me at your heart !
Shall I give up the ring ? (*offers it.*)

ISABELLA, (*hesitatingly..*)

Let me look on it !

TORTESA, (*withdrawing it.*)

A moment yet ! You'll give it ere you think !
Oh is it fair that Angelo had *days*,
To tell his love, and I have not *one hour* ?
How know you that I cannot love as well ?

ISABELLA.

'Tis possible !

TORTESA.

Ah ! thanks !

ISABELLA.

But I have given
My heart to him !

TORTESA.

You gave your *troth* to me !
 If, of these two gifts you must take back one,
 Rob not the poorer ! Shall I keep the ring ?

(*Isabella looks down.*)

ANGELO.

She hesitates ! I've waited here too long !

(*Tears the deed in two.*)

Perish your gift, and farewell Isabella !

ISABELLA, (*advancing a step with clasp'd hands.*)
 You'll kill me, Angelo ! Come back !

TORTESA, (*seizing him by the hand as he hesitates,
 and flinging him back with a strong effort.*)

He shall !

ANGELO.

Stand from my path ! Or, if you care to try
 Some other weapon than a glozing tongue,
 Follow me forth where we may find the room !

TORTESA.

You shall not go.

ANGELO, (*draws.*)

Have at thee then !

(*Attacks Tortesa, who disarms him, and holds his sword-point to his breast. Duke and others come forward.*)

TORTESA.

The bar

'Twixt me and heaven, boy ! is the life I hold
Now at my mercy ! Take it, Isabella !
And with it the poor gift he threw away !
I'll write a new deed ere you've time to marry,
So take your troth back with your bridal ring,
And thus I join you !

(*Takes Isabella's hand, but Angelo refuses his.*)

ANGELO, (*proudly.*)

Never ! But for me,
The hand you hold were joyfully your own !
Shall I receive a life and fortune from you,
Yet stand 'twixt you and *that* ?

ISABELLA, (*turning from Angelo.*)

Thou dost not love me !

TORTESA.

Believe it not ! He does ! An instant more
I'll brush this new-spun cobweb from his eyes.

(*Crosses to Zippa.*)

Fair Zippa ! in this cross'd and tangled world
Few wed the one they could have lov'd the best,
And fewer still wed well for happiness !
We each have lost to-day what best we love.
But as the drops that mingled in the sky,
Are torn apart in the tempestuous sea,
Yet with a new drop tremble into one,

We two, if you're content, may swim together !
What say you ?

ZIPPA, (*giving her hand.*)

I have thought on it before,
When I believed you cold and treacherous.
Tis easy when I know you kind and noble.

TORTESA.

To-morrow then we'll wed ; and now, fair Signor,
(*To Angelo.*)

Take you her hand, nor fear to rob Tortesa !
(*Turns to the Duke.*)

Shall it be so, my liege ?

DUKE.

You please me well.
And if you'll join your marriage feasts together
I'll play my part, and give the brides away !

TORTESA.

Not so, my liege ! I could not see her *wed him*.
To *give her to him* has been all I could ;
For I have sought her with the dearest pulses
That quicken in my heart, my *love and scorn*.
She's taught me that the high-born may be true.
I thank her for it—but, too close on that
Follow'd the love, whose lightning flash of honor
Brightens, but straight is dark again ! My liege,
The poor who leap up to the stars for duty
Must drop to earth again ! and here, if't please you,

I take my feet forever from your palace,
And, match'd as best beseems me, say farewell.

(*Takes Zippa's hand, and the curtain drops.*)

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